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ABSTRACT

This handbook, written to assist helping professionals in meeting the needs of women clients, states that social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors share a common need for greater understanding of the dynamics of women's lives during rapid social change. The purpose of this handbook, therefore, is to provide information about those critical events in women's lives which have influenced their identity development, and to identify effective counseling responses to critical events in female identity formation. Part One describes the status of women and the helping professions. Part Two presents research conducted with 100 women's descriptions of critical events in their lives. The study design, interviewers' training, interview procedures, subject characteristics, and analysis of material are discussed; findings are presented and racial differences are examined. The final section focuses on the counseling responses of helping professionals who responded to five vignettes depicting women in critical situations: the consensus of these professionals is sketched for each vignette in Part Three of this handbook. (NRB)

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CRITICAL EVENTS SHAPING WOMAN'S IDENTITY:
A Handbook for the Helping Professions

Donna May Avery

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Chicago, Illinois

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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PREFACE

The Women's Educational Equity Act, which funded the preparation of this handbook, has as its goal the development of products and programs to increase the responsive capacities of education and related social institutions to meet the unique needs of women at this point in history. This handbook is intended to increase the responsive capacities of the various helping professions to meet the needs of women clients. It is designed for use by current practitioners as well as by faculties in academic areas which prepare future members of the helping professions.

The helping professions include a variety of practitioners who in some way influence the progress of women toward independence, self-determination, competency and efficacy. Social workers, psychiatrists, counseling and clinical psychologists, and rehabilitation and guidance counselors are considered, for the purposes of this handbook, to be part of the helping professions. This is not intended to minimize the very real differences among such groups in terms of the nature and extent of professional training, theoretical orientations, service settings and conceptualizatons of professional role, but rather to focus upon the common need for greater understandings of the dynamics of women's lives in a time of rapid social change.

At the 1978 annual convention of the American Psychological Association, Division 17, Counseling Psychology, endorsed a set of principles for counseling and psychotherapy with women. This represents the first attempt by a national professional organization to delineate standards which affect both the current practice of counseling and psychotherapy and the preparation of future members of the helping professions. The implementation of such standards can be facilitated by the use of material such as this handbook both for inservice training of staff members and for incorporation into graduate professional programs.

The sensitization of the helping professions to the needs of women and the subsequent increase in responsive capacities of those professions are important not only because of the existence of professional standards but for economic reasons as well. It is widely known that women are the greater consumers of mental health services, whether those services are paid for directly by the client or received through a public or privately funded agency. As increasingly larger numbers of women become aware of sex bias in the delivery of services, they are deliberately seeking out agencies as well as individual practitioners with some reputation for sensitivity to the unique life situations of women today.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information about those critical events in women's lives which they perceive have influenced their identity development and further, to identify effective counseling responses to critical events

in female identity formation. This is not primarily a research report but rather a resource to be used by present and future members of the helping professions. Material has been selected for inclusion on the basis of its value for the practitioner, whose understanding of the dynamics of critical events in women's lives will help women facilitate the development of capacities and the recognition of potentialities toward alternative modes of female identity.

The ability to understand the dynamics of contemporary female identity development and the influence of social, political and economic forces on that development, together with the capacity to render services which support and facilitate the growth of the woman client toward mastery of herself and her changing environment--these are no longer optional concerns for present members of the helping professions, nor are they curricular options in academic programs for future professionals. Professionals often reflect a cognitive recognition of the needs of women and minorities, but do not always implement changes in theory and practice to address those needs. This handbook provides an approach to such implementation, no longer to be ignored by the helping professions in meeting the unique needs of the female majority.

The participants whose interviews yielded the data for the findings reported in this book were black and white women from primarily middle/upper-middle-class, professional, and highly educated backgrounds. Thus the reader should be cautious about generalizing the findings to women who differ markedly

from the participants. It should also be noted that while the black and white participants displayed differences on certain dimensions, these differences, reported in percentages, should be considered only trends in the present sample of participants, rather than differences characteristic of the general population of white and black women.

Donna May Avery

Chicago, Illinois
March, 1979

P A R T I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One

WOMEN AND THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

The rapid pace and pervasive scope of recent social change have forced members of the helping professions to raise questions about their role and responsibilities in facilitating the maximum development of all persons. At one time, the professions were echoing the question originally posed by Freud, "What do women want?" (i.e., "What do women want from us?") But today our questions are focused more precisely. How do we help women assume roles for which they were unprepared by early socialization? How do we foster the realization of unused potentialities? How do we assist women to enhance the quality of their own lives and those of their families, communities and the larger society of which we are all a part?

Women need more than special programs on sexuality, effective parenting, rape, divorce and so forth; more than flexible working hours, admission requirements and course offerings; and even more than the availability of women counselors--although all of these are certainly important. From the helping professions, whose services they seek in time of crisis, women need a more basic understanding of their struggles with themselves and with the world. Women (just like men) seek counseling when they cannot find the answers themselves, when they desperately need some way to get a

handle on the crises and conflicts which accompany rapid social change.

As increasingly larger numbers of women seek the assistance of helping professionals in making educational/vocational decisions and in resolving personal/interpersonal conflicts arising in part from previous sex-role socialization, the existence of inequitable counseling practices which limit both aspirations and functioning becomes more and more evident. The impact of rapid change on women's lives calls for the pushing back of traditional sex-role parameters and for a view of women which includes emphasis on potentialities and embraces a wide range of choices of careers, relationships and lifestyles.

Attitudes, however, may be slow to change. A cursory review of the literature on differential counselor perceptions of men versus women establishes the prevalence of sex-role stereotypes in the current practices of helping professionals. In what has come to be widely regarded as a landmark study, Broverman et al. (1970) explicitly identified the double standard in mental health. That is, clinical judgments about the characteristics of healthy, mature individuals are different depending upon the sex of the person being judged, and further, these differences parallel stereotypic sex-role differences. In addition, behaviors judged healthy for an adult (sex not specified), which are presumed to reflect an ideal standard of mental health, resemble behaviors judged healthy for men but differ from behaviors judged healthy for women--that is, mental

health professionals appear to apply different standards of psychological well-being to women versus men.

Similar bias has been reported in secondary school counselors who reinforce traditionally feminine career goals in female clients (Thomas and Steward, 1971), and/or who actively discourage females from entering masculine occupations (Pietrofesa and Scholossberg, 1973). Bingham and House found counselors to be greatly misinformed on issues relating to women in the labor force (1973a) and to display attitudes which demean career achievement in women (1973b).

Taken collectively, these studies demonstrate that practicing professionals may not differ substantially from the general population in terms of their attitudes toward women who choose to pursue lifestyles which depart from traditional sex-role socialization. But, more often than not, these are the very women who need and seek the assistance of the helping professions.

There is more recent evidence that the attitudes of female counselors are changing and becoming more accepting of career choices and lifestyles which depart from the traditional (Englehard et al., 1976; Maslin and Davis, 1975). However, a corresponding change in the attitudes of male counselors has not been found. Considering that the counseling profession is composed largely of males, there is much work still to be done. Although attitudes may be slow to change, the helping professions have begun to respond to the unique needs of women through research, professional associations and program development.

First, the helping professions, together with the social and behavioral sciences which inform the work of those professions, are currently studying, writing and thinking on all manner of topics and variables related to differences and similarities between the sexes and their life experiences. A review of the contents of current professional journals as well as of the convention programs of the various helping professions will indicate a common concern today for greater understanding of the dynamics of men's and women's lives, together with the identification of strategies to enhance those lives. The study of adulthood has come of age.

A second way in which the helping professions are responding to the needs of women is the formation of special committees or task forces within the national professional associations. The American Personnel and Guidance Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association and the National Association of Social Workers--organizations whose memberships include the vast majority of helping professionals--all have some type of special committee on women, although the scope and power of such committees vary considerably. The professional associations provide information and resources on women's issues, in addition to monitoring procedures and policies affecting women professionals. Some associations have developed and disseminated inservice training workshop materials and have developed national networks of resource persons on women's issues. Professional guidelines and standards for the practice of counseling and psychotherapy with women as well as for the training of future members

of the helping professions have been developed and are being considered and endorsed by a variety of professional groups. While the current efforts of professional associations are needed to identify and define issues, their influence on the day-to-day practice of counseling and psychotherapy with women or on the structure and delivery of helping services is just beginning to be felt.

Finally, the development of special programs illustrates a third type of response to the changing needs of women. Assertiveness training, group counseling for and by women, and the reduction of sex bias in career counseling and vocational testing, as well as the many topical programs on rape, divorce, widowhood, sexuality, child care, dual-career families and spouse abuse, are all examples of the current efforts of counseling and mental health facilities. While these programmatic thrusts are important and necessary, they are for the most part directed toward specific issues rather than toward a more complete understanding of the ongoing process of female identity formation. Furthermore, such programs are frequently peripheral to the counseling activities of the center or agency sponsoring them. That is, they do not necessarily influence the behavior of the total staff, nor do they in any systematic way increase the responsive capacities of the counseling profession as a whole.

Since the enactment of Title IX and other legislation to reduce sex bias, the situation has become even more acute; for while it is relatively easy (albeit costly) to eliminate sex bias in career and testing materials or to hire more female

staff, it is quite a different matter to influence the subtleties of interpersonal communications as they occur in the counseling relationship. Until the helping professions have a model which is capable of explaining the psychodynamics of female identity formation (and the increasing variation in that process), and which provides theoretical and empirical bases from which to derive effective courseling strategies, there can be little systematic change in responsive capacities.

The capacity of a helping professional to respond to the needs of a given client depends in part on his/her ability to conceptualize the client's struggle in terms that not only make sense to the client, but also allow the professional to relate the client's experiences to existing bodies of knowledge. The critical events paradigm is particularily appropriate for use by the helping professions. Frequently psychodynamic processes are conceptualized as relating to critical events (or issues), their resolution or lack thereof. Furthermore, the use of the critical events-identity formation model allows the professional to draw upon his/her existing body of knowledge and skill, and at the same time provides a framework for the reorganization of existing concepts, theories and practices so as to address the counseling needs of women at critical times in their identity formation process.

Chapter Two

UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY THROUGH CRITICAL EVENTS

Identity and its meanings dominate the thoughts of twentieth-century men and women. Not only do the mass media daily recount the experiences of adults defining and redefining themselves as spouses, parents, workers and citizens, but also on a broader scale emerging nations, ethnic groups, and even professions and institutions are caught up in the process of defining their identities. Our individual and collective fascination with who we are and who we might become indicates an awareness of alternatives, together with the freedom to pursue those alternatives which are unique to this era.

The study of identity commands the attention of social and behavioral scientists as well as members of the various helping professions. More recently, historians and political scientists have also examined the identity formation process in statesmen, presidents, and other prominent figures.

How is it that we become who we are? Somehow nations, ethnic groups, statesmen and each individual man and woman arrive at a point where they can differentiate between "what is me" and "what is not me." What is the nature of that process and what are the critical points in that process?

Identity is defined as the state or fact of remaining the same person under varying aspects or conditions. It is the condition of being oneself and not another. Although the work of Erik Erikson (1968) fails to consider important sex differences in the identity formation process, nevertheless it provides a base for current understandings of the meaning of identity. Simply put, identity refers to the degree of similarity between "who I think I am" and "whom others think me to be." Identity refers to a kind of relationship between self-perceptions on the one hand and the perceptions (and expectations) of others on the other hand. Thus the maintenance of a stable personal identity depends on consistency and continuity of both interpersonal relationships and the situations (home, work, etc.) in which the individual interacts with others. However, for many adults, and particularly for women at this point in history, both personal relationships and the situations in which people act are constantly changing. These changes, more often than not, necessitate redefinitions of identity.

Although this century has witnessed a surge of interest in topics related to identity formation, only recently has much attention been focused specifically on that process as it occurs in women. It is well known by professionals as well as laypersons that the female identity formation process has been viewed as a variation on the male pattern and explained in terms of what was known about men's life experiences. Theorists and practioners alike would even go so far as to suggest that a woman's identity formation process could not

be complete until marriage, for her ultimate self-definition was dependent upon the identity of her husband. Such a view is no longer functional in a society where increasingly larger numbers of adult women not only are alone or single parents because of personal choice, divorce, desertion or widowhood, but even if married, can expect to be employed outside the home for a considerable period of their adult lives.

Women are experiencing not only changing roles and self-perceptions, but also changes in the expectations of others and the demands of new lifestyles which necessitate the redefinition of their identities. One result of recent and rapid changes in societal as well as individual perceptions of woman's role and responsibilities has been to greatly increase the distance between expectations and capacities. In other words, the gap between "what I am expected (either by self or by others) to do" and "what I am capable of doing" is constantly growing wider.

For some women, changes in their life situations or social circumstances bring responsibilities which they are unprepared to address. Displaced homemakers, single heads of households and the growing number of widows are all examples of women thrust by forces beyond their control into alien and terrifying situations for which little, if anything, in their socialization process and previous life experiences has prepared them to understand, much less to use as a basis for action.

For other women, self-expectations have changed to embrace new roles and role combinations, but frequently

such changes have not been accompanied by opportunities to develop the skills and capacities necessary to implement those roles. Aspirations outstrip abilities. Due to Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action programs, women and minorities may find themselves, for example, in jobs for which they may be ostensibly qualified but for which they lack the necessary personal capacities and interpersonal skills for success. The relatively high turnover of young women in managerial positions in business and industry is an example of women whose level of aspiration and self-expectation exceeds the capacities necessary for fulfillment.

But whatever the particular circumstances, women today struggle to bridge the ever-widening gap between expectations and capacities. The consistency and congruity of both interpersonal relationships and life situations which form the basis of the stable, adult identity are eclipsed if not gone forever. Some may mourn, some may rejoice, but those who would persevere and prosper will rediscover potentialities and forge new models of adult female identity.

Although the identity formation process is continuous, in the life of every person there are particular critical events or series of events so powerful in nature, so pervasive in scope, as to challenge existing assumptions about self, roles and relationships. Critical events provide the occasion for the redefinition of identity. Erikson (1968) refers to such events as turning points or critical moments when previously held notions about self are called

into question. Something happens, something powerful enough to cause the person to ask, "Who am I now?" There is the sense that "who I was before" is no longer adequate to meet the demands of the new situation.

Critical events disrupt the equilibrium of identity. It is precisely at these times that the individual is open to change, to new insights, awareness and self-understandings, to new experiences and actions, and to previously unimagined dimensions of self on the one hand, but equally vulnerable to fear, anxiety, depression, immobilization and rage on the other.

In some respects, critical events share the qualities of an epiphany. Epiphany refers to the sudden perception of the essential nature or meaning of something, a moment of truth in which all is revealed. There is a sense in which an epiphany is experienced as the lifting of a curtain so that what was known in shadows is now brilliantly outlined.

Because of the changes in women's lives and because of women's increasing consciousness of their personhood, roles, rights and responsibilities, the critical events in their identity formation process are likely to be accompanied by a kind of epiphany which illuminates the reality, scope and meaning of their second-class citizenship. There comes a growing and gnawing awareness that all is not right, that women are consistently perceived as persons with derived status to be used and discarded at the whim of

another person. The epiphany lays bare the basic fraud in what was believed to be the order of things.

The varying responses of women to epiphany-producing critical events have been described in detail elsewhere (Avery, 1977). Most typical are:

1. Shock and denial similar to one of the dying stages identified by Kübler-Ross (1969). The reaction is, "No, not me. This can't be happening to me." Denial is manifest through the vigorous pursuit of activities which were rewarded in the past. Activity is a tried and true method of managing anxiety.
2. Withdrawal and depression when the event is swift, unexpected and pervasive. For some, the epiphany is so devastating as to shatter all sense of self-worth and purpose in life. All the meanings of life were related to previous sex-role difnitions, and in a very real sense there is little of self that remains.
3. Anger and rage expressed overtly. Women describe themselves as having been duped, sold out, betrayed and raped by the universe, and the response is frequently anger and rage in cosmic proportions.

Some psychological phenomena surrounding critical events resemble those described by Kübler-Ross (1969). The person experiences the death of those parts of the self identified with former roles. The passing of former selves

is accompanied by a fear of separation from the familiar. The future is unknown and one is alone without the knowledge that there are alternatives. Critical events bring a period of mourning, for who does not mourn the loss of parts of self, especially in the face of uncertainty, and who does not grieve for a world where things are as they were promised, even though the makers of the promises were themselves deceived?

Critical events must produce some change in the original identity. These events can be maladaptive and lead to retreat or frustration, or they can be productive and inaugurate a new sense of efficacy, a reaffirmation of self, and movement toward a higher level of personal integration and differentiation. For the woman who seeks counseling at a critical moment in her life, the positive resolution of the crisis is jeopardized when the counselor employs the double standard for mental health, and the client is robbed of a precious opportunity for growth toward self-determination and realization of potential.

More often than not, persons seeking counseling are in the midst of a critical life event. The client is frequently suffering considerable emotional pain, accompanied by confusion in the cognitive domain. The old, familiar ways of thinking about self and the world have been disrupted, and they no longer provide an adequate basis for action. New competencies or renewed awarenesses of old or potential skills must be developed by the client if the

critical event is to be resolved successfully. For women, the needed new competencies often require the development of greater degrees of independence and assertiveness, qualities which most women have been socialized to reject, if not fear. The counseling profession's capacity to maximize the potential for the productive resolution of critical events in female identity will be enhanced by a greater understanding of the nature of those events.

P A R T II

THE CRITICAL EVENTS

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

Research in the social sciences is generally thought of as either nomothetic or idiographic in nature. The nomothetic approach is directed toward the study of selected, quantifiable variables operating in large groups. Common factors in the development and functioning of many persons are emphasized and findings are generalized either to the population at large or to a particular sub-group, e.g., college students, pre-school children, single parents.

Idiographic research, on the other hand, focuses upon the uniqueness of the single individual and upon the dynamic interrelationships among many facets of the person's life. Single-case research yields in-depth understandings of human existence, and frequently these findings become the basis for the definition of research variables and for the generation of nomothetic research hypotheses. The investigation upon which this handbook is based falls somewhere between the nomothetic approach and the idiographic approach and as such employs some methodologies characteristic of each.

This chapter will present the procedures through which the critical events material described in Chapters Four and Five was obtained. Selection and training of the interviewers and

steps in the analysis of the interview material will also be discussed.

Insofar as possible, the design of a study fits its goals. The goal of this investigation was to discover those events perceived to be turning points in the identity formation process of women and to do so with a methodology reflecting careful attention to the present social context of research on women.

Considerations of the status of women are informed by viewing women as a minority group. While there are very real and important distinctions between women and those other minority groups in which the basis for participation is racial or ethnic, the experiences are parallel and are sometimes subsumed in the term "second-class citizen." For the researcher who would study women or any minority group, there is the central methodological problem of determining the conditions under which the subject is most likely to provide the researcher with information which accurately reflects perceived experiences.

One of the characteristics of members of minority or other low-status groups is their tendency, resulting from years of socialization, to discount the value of what they know about themselves from their own experiences. Women and Blacks, for example, typically have given more credence to the notions of members of the high-status group about who and what they are and should be than they have to knowledge derived from their individual and collective experiences. In the hierarchy of knowledge about minority groups (women, for example, here), not only is

what is known by women and what is known about women devalued, but what women know about women is devalued most of all and frequently dismissed as folklore, as "woman talk," both by serious scholars and by women themselves who have internalized the values of the larger society. However, it is precisely that body of knowledge which women, through their individual and collective experiences, know about women which, if brought to light, can inform the counseling and therapeutic practice of members of the helping professions and render practitioners more able to meet the needs of their women clients.

In order for the helping professions to formulate meaningful hypotheses about female identity formation, it is necessary to research, to search again, the critical experiences in that process in such a way as to bring to light that knowledge which was previously devalued. The importance of this investigation of critical events in female identity lies both in the sources of the information and in the procedures used.

Selection of Interviewers

One hundred interviews were conducted by four interviewers, three of them paid members of the project staff and the fourth a graduate practicum student in Counseling and Guidance. Because of the sensitive and frequently intimate nature of the material to be requested and received during the interviews, close attention was paid to the interviewers' relevant demographic variables of not only sex, race, age, and religion, but also place of residence, marital status, and socioeconomic background. The staff profile reflected diversity on these demographic

variables, with the exception of sex: All interviewer were women. Similarly, in terms of race, black women were interviewed by black women interviewers.

In addition to demographic variables, the criteria for the selection of interviewers included knowledge and demonstrated competencies in counseling and particularly in counseling women. Academic background in Women's Studies or in some area of the social or behavioral sciences relating to sex differences was also considered an important characteristic for interviewers. For in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the qualifications for a good interviewer are much the same as those for an effective counselor, involving a capacity for empathetic listening and reflection of thoughts and feelings, an ability to focus the subject's attention on a particular theme until it has been explored thoroughly and an ability to pose open-ended questions that cause the subject to reflect more deeply upon experiences.

A final qualification for the selection of interviewers was that they be in positions within their communities to have access to a wide range of potential subjects, since the interviewers were responsible for locating and identifying women to be interviewed. For this reason, interviewers were active participants in community life, holding memberships in a variety of groups and networks from which the subjects were drawn.

Training of Interviewers

The training of interviewers was based on the theory and the practice of interviewing discussed in the Handbook of

Social Psychology, Second Edition (Lindzey and Aronson, 1968). Because the interviewers were already experienced counselors of women, the training focused almost exclusively on the conduct of these particular interviews, and less emphasis was placed on interviewing techniques in general. Although there is little research to substantiate just what kind of interviewer training is most effective, the Handbook of Social Psychology suggests including some of the following topics, with varying emphasis depending upon the goals of the particular project: purpose of the research; role of the interviewer; description and demonstration of interview techniques; practice and evaluation; review and assessment of interview forms and protocols; demonstration of practice interviews; and discussion with colleagues in a non-judgmental, accepting atmosphere.

The training sessions included a thorough orientation to the goals, objectives, and procedures of the project and to the intent and purpose of the Women's Educational Equity Act as well. The interview structure was thoroughly reviewed with the the four interviewers. Particular attention was devoted to defining terms and to establishing interviewer consensus on the meaning of categories such as behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and coping strategies. Finally, interviewers conducted and taped practice interviews which were subsequently reviewed in project staff meetings. Listening to other taped interviews provided the occasion for each interviewer to identify both effective and ineffective techniques and to observe the quality of response resulting from good techniques.

Because of the large number of interviews to be conducted and their length, plus the lack of transcription resources, interview material was recorded in written form rather than taped. Training sessions included practice in the written recording of interview material. The goal of these particular training sessions was interviewer consensus on both the material to be recorded and the written words used to record the material. Interviewers heard tapes of practice interviews while taking notes on the interview material. Interviewer notes were compared with those of the Project Director. After several practice tries, interviewers were selecting and recording essentially the same information in essentially the same words.

Training sessions and subsequent project staff meetings were devoted to approaches to be used in the event of a subject's becoming emotionally upset during the interview. This possibility was anticipated and did in fact occur in a few interviews. The counseling skills of the interviewers were particularly important in such situations. Furthermore, the interview frequently became the occasion for the subject's achieving new insights into herself and her life, again calling for the use of the interviewer's counseling skills.

As the interviewing process progressed, project staff meetings focused on periodic re-evaluation of progress and identification of difficulties and problems. Individual conferences with the Project Director or Project Assistant supplemented the general staff meetings.

Interview Procedures

The structure of the one hundred interviews is best characterized as the nonscheduled standardized form described by Richardson et al. (1965), a model which both establishes classes of information to be obtained and provides for a high degree of individual variation in response. The interviews were standardized to the degree that certain classes of information were desired and that those classes were known in advance by the subjects. However, the interviews were nonscheduled in that the interviewers were free to formulate questions to elicit the desired classes of information as they saw fit, based on the needs of the individual subject.

All interviews included a review of the purposes of the Women's Educational Equity Act and of this particular project, together with the goals of the interview itself. Emphasis was placed on making certain that the subject understood what was expected of her in the interview and consented to participate on the basis of thorough and accurate knowledge. As part of the interview, subjects also were asked to complete a Personal Data Sheet and Subject Release Form. Following each interview, the interviewer completed an Interview Evaluation Form.

All subjects in this investigation were volunteers who consented to be interviewed after receiving both oral and written information about the nature of the project. Most interviews were about two hours in length, although a few were completed in one hour and some lasted three hours.

The following guidelines were mailed to all subjects prior to their being interviewed and have been reproduced verbatim here:

> The goal of this research project is to develop a better understanding of the different ways in which women see themselves - for example, their roles in society, life goals, rights, needs, fears, responsibilities and sources of fulfillment. The knowledge gained in this project will then be used to aid counselors as they try to help women in their search for self-understanding and self-determination.
>
> During our interview, we will be trying to find out about the events in your life which have influenced how you see yourself as a woman. In other words, what experiences or happenings or critical events or turning points have made a difference in your feelings and understanding about yourself? These events may be external or internal. That is, they may be something that actually happened to you, or they may take the form of realizations, awarenesses, and other kinds of internal experiences. They may have been associated with positive or negative emotions. They may or may not be known to anyone else or viewed as important by anyone else. There may be few or many of these events that you can recall. The number of events is not important. Nor do they have to be discussed in the order in which you experienced them. (We can go back and determine that at the end of the interview.)
>
> What is important here, for this interview, is that <u>you</u> see the events as having made a difference in your view of yourself as a woman. Please feel free to spend some time before the interview thinking about some of these events in your life. (Make some notes for yourself, if it would help.)
>
> We greatly appreciate your participation in our efforts. Hopefully, this project will help make counselors and other mental health workers more responsive to the needs of women.

During the opening moments of the interview, the interviewer again reviewed the purpose of the interview. A few women who initially volunteered to be interviewed did withdraw when they had a more complete understanding of what was involved.

The structure of the interviews was based on three assumptions:

1. The subject's defensiveness would be minimized if she were allowed to select the time and place of the interview. Therefore, interviews were conducted on the subject's own territory--her home, her place of work, or another place of her choice.

2. Given the freedom to do so, subjects would self-select (within the guidelines) what they perceived as the most important material and would omit what they did not view as important. We can be relatively sure that the events identified as critical were in fact so perceived by the subjects, even though all perceived critical events were not necessarily reported.

3. Subjects would select the order of events to be described. Events did not have to be presented in either chronological order or order of importance. Self-ordering of events assumes that the subject will begin with less threatening material and, as rapport with the interviewer grows, proceed to more intimate material. (At the end of the interview, the subject reviewed her critical events, placing them in chronological order.)

Although no formal follow-up evaluation was done with the one hundred women interviewed, informal comments subsequently made to the interviewers indicated not only that the subjects felt they were contributing to an effort that would increase the knowledge of helping professionals about the needs of women, but that for many, the interview itself became the occasion for

reflection about their lives, for the dawning of realizations about themselves, and for the identification of their own (and previously unrecognized) power and strength. Some women even went so far as to indicate that were they to be asked in the future to describe the critical events in their lives, they would identify the interview as one of those events.

Analysis of Interview Material

Investigations which rely primarily on the use of non-scheduled standardized interviews face serious difficulties in the analysis of the material. Such interviews frequently generate more material than can be analyzed. Consequently, it becomes necessary to extract certain classes of information from the pool of material. In this process, much of the richness of the individual experience may be overshadowed for the moment. Although many women may identify their first job, for example, as a critical event in their identity formation process, the universe of meanings each woman associates with that first job may be quite different. Closely related is the investigator's task of developing a type of quantitative system through which to compare material that is essentially qualitative in nature.

A total of six hundred and twenty-four single critical events were obtained from the one hundred interviews. The majority of subjects reported five to six critical events, although some reported as few as four and some as many as nine. The number of events reported by black and white subjects was comparable.

The approach used to analyze the critical events was essentially empirical. The pool of critical events was reviewed initially to discover dominant themes. Categories based upon common themes were subsequently developed and the parameters of those categories were defined according to the contents of the events. Five categories of events were identified which covered five hundred and sixty-three, or ninety percent, of the total number of events. Sixty-one events (10%) did not fall easily into any of the five categories and were considered separately. The complete coding schema illustrating the five categories and the particular events included in those categories will be found in Appendix A.

The five categories of events which emerged were titled (1) relational; (2) work related; (3) educational; (4) personal; and (5) health related. While the great majority of the critical events could be easily coded into one of these five categories, some events showed dimensions of two categories. For example, events centering on tension between work and family (of which eighteen were reported) could have been coded under the relational category or under the work category. In such instances, the event was coded in keeping with the subject's perception of the event insofar as that could be determined from the interview material. Since these particular events (tension between work and family) appeared to be perceived as having more to do with the subject's working than with her relationship with her family, they were coded under the work category rather than the relational category.

Frequencies of critical events, both across and within categories, have been compared by percentages. It should be noted that it is the critical event which was the unit of analysis, not the individual subject. (In all tables that follow, frequencies and percentages refer to the critical events, not to the subjects.) Finally, the resources available to the project did not allow for statistical analysis of the critical events data in the light of demographic variables, although limited comparisons were made between the critical events data and the demographic characteristics of the subjects.

Demographic Characteristics of Subjects

One hundred women in Illinois and Michigan were interviewed regarding the critical events shaping their identities as women. It was our intention, insofar as possible, to interview women from a variety of environments. Places of residence ranged from the large urban areas of Chicago and Detroit to the rural and primarily agricultural Berrien County, Michigan. Approximately half the women lived in suburbs or smaller cities.

The interviewee Personal Data Sheet included items on age, race, father's occupation, education, family income, work history, marital status, children and religion. Complete data on these variables will be found in Appendix B. Although most women responded to all the items, there is some variation (between 91 and 100) in the number of responses for each item. Information will be presented initially for the total group of women, followed by comparisons between races.

The majority of the women interviewed (69%) were mid-life adults. Almost one-half (44%) ranged in age from thirty to thirty-nine, and twenty-five percent were in their forties. At either end of the age spectrum were twelve percent under thirty, fifteen percent over fifty and four percent over sixty.

Interviewees were asked to specify the occupation of their fathers. Occupations were then classified into the following categories: (1) professional; (2) managerial and proprietary (including farmers); (3) clerical; (4) skilled; (5) semi-skilled; and (6) unskilled. No responses were reported in the clerical category.

Managers and proprietors (including farmers) were the fathers' occupations for thirty-eight percent of the women interviewed, and this category composed the largest occupational group. Semi-skilled workers followed as the fathers' occupation for twenty-two percent of the women, with the category of professional close behind, accounting for twenty percent. Skilled workers composed seventeen percent and unskilled workers three percent of the total of fathers' occupations.

The educational levels achieved by the women are high. Asked to specify their highest level of education, sixty-four percent reported some graduate study, twenty-one percent held a college degree, fourteen percent had completed some type of postsecondary education, and one percent had finished high school (or completed the GED). The contrast between the higher levels of educational achievement reported by the interviewees and the occupations of their fathers suggests an upwardly mobile group of women.

Nearly three-fourths (73%) of the women interviewed in this investigation were married. In addition, thirteen percent were divorced, and six percent were single. Separation and widowhood accounted for four percent each of the total group. Ninety-five percent were mothers, having from one to eight children, the great majority having two or three.

With the exception of one woman, all are or have been employed outside the home. Seventy percent are currently employed, with the remaining thirty percent having been employed in the past, although not currently working outside the home. (A number of recent studies have found that women with college and graduate degrees are more likely to be employed outside the home, even during the child-rearing years. The high percentage of employed interviewees supports that trend.)

Subjects were asked to indicate their total family income. Twenty-six percent reported family incomes of over $40,000, sixteen percent reported incomes ranging between $30,001 and $40,000, and thirty-one percent fell into the $20,001 to $30,000 range. Twenty percent reported incomes of $12,001 to $20,000, and six percent in the $5,001 to $12,000 range. One percent of the interviewees reported total family incomes under $5,000. In summary, nearly three-fourths reported family incomes of $20,001 or more, which may, at first glance, appear to suggest an upper-middle-class group of women. However, these are <u>family</u> incomes and, in most cases, are being produced by two wage earners who support a family of at least four persons. In light of the high level of educational achievement evidenced in this group, the total family incomes are surprisingly low.

In the area of religion, fifty-three percent were Protestant, nineteen percent were Catholic, and fifteen percent were Jewish. Thirteen percent indicated some other type of religious preference. Interviewees were asked to indicate the importance of religion (as distinguished from church attendance) in their lives. Thirty-five percent reported that religion was very important in their lives; forty-six percent saw it as fairly important; and religion was viewed as unimportant by nineteen percent of the women interviewed.

Finally, each subject was asked to specify the degree of difference between her mother's perception of the role of women and her own. Fifty-two percent judged their mother's role perception to be different to very different from their own, and forty percent reported it to be similar to very similar to their own. Seven percent were not sure.

Of the one hundred women interviewed, sixty-four were white and thirty-six were black. This investigation did not include women of other racial backgrounds.

As a group, the black women were younger, with one-fourth (26%) under thirty. Their marital status is more diversified than that of white women, who tended overwhelmingly to be married. In addition, the black women reported a wider range in the number of children they had,with more black women having no children or one child on the one hand, and a greater percentage having large families of five or six children on the other.

The level of education for the black women was slightly higher than that for the whites, and when this was contrasted with father's occupation, the black women appeared to be more upwardly mobile than the whites. Religion was more likely to be viewed as an important force in their lives by black women than by white women. When black women compared their role perceptions with those of their mothers, the perceptions were reported to be similar or very similar for fifty-eight percent of the blacks as contrasted with thirty percent of the whites.

Although all but one of the black women interviewed were currently employed outside the home, their reported total family incomes were lower in general and there was greater variation in income levels for blacks than for whites. This may be in part related to the younger age of the black women, some of whom are just beginning their careers. However, in addition to the effects of both racial and sexual discrimination in employment, the lower total family incomes may be explained by the fact that forty-six percent of the black women in this group are not married (as contrasted with sixteen percent of the white women) and, therefore, are probably the sole support of not only themselves but also their children.

The one hundred women interviewed in this project were not selected specifically to compose a representative sample of American women. However, it was our intention to include as diverse a group of subjects as possible within the limitations of our resources. The selection of a fairly comparable group of black and white women, particularly in terms of educational attainment level, was one of the goals of this project.

In summary, these demographic data point to a typical interviewee who was in her thirties, married with two children, employed, and highly educated. Although she was clearly middle-class in terms of income level, she was also upwardly mobile, and combined the roles of wife/mother and worker. This multiple-role woman is increasingly the norm as more and more women enter the labor force and families require the financial support of two wage earners.

Those women who are now assuming multiple roles, both within the family and within the marketplace, may be viewed as creating life models for the future, models which provide role alternatives and which allow for increasing diversification in lifestyle. The women interviewed here have managed to define for themselves not only different roles, but roles for which the social expectations and assumptions are often contradictory. Their identities as women allow for the expression of a variety of capacities.

How did they come to define themselves as they do? In the face of contradictory and negative sex-role expectations, how did these women forge for themselves an identity that allows them participation in both worlds? What were the critical events or turning points in those lives? What are the events which these women, as they reflect upon their lives, perceive as having been meaningful and forceful in the shaping of their identities as women?

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The shaping of every woman's identity can be demarcated by certain important events which serve as turning points and, more often than not, become the occasion for the redefinition of self as well as for the acquisition of new capacities and skills. These critical events (as they are known in the literature of development and counseling psychology) may be thought of as a kind of intersection on the road of adult life. They represent a coming together of forces within the person intersecting with forces from the outside world. The successful and productive resolution of critical events in the identity formation process of any adult demands the power and capacity to make decisions about the future course of one's existence and the meaning of that existence at a given point in human history. Our lives as adults pivot around critical events.

This chapter will present the critical events material obtained in the interviews. The focus will be upon the identification of general tendencies or predominant themes within the categories of perceived critical events. In Chapter Five the differences between events reported by black and white women will be discussed. In this chapter,

however, the emphasis will be on similarities or the common experience of both black and white women. Although the complete data upon which this chapter is based will be found in Appendix C, some tables have been included in the body of this chapter. Raw numbers have been converted to percentages for easy comparison across categories and between races. (The reader will note that a column of percentages may not always total one hundred percent because of the loss or gain in rounding.)

Five categories of critical events were empirically developed. During a preliminary review of the interview material, categories were listed which would encompass the majority of the events. Events were subsequently coded into five categories. Of the six hundred and twenty-four perceived critical events, ten percent did not appear to fall into any of the five categories, and will be discussed separately.

Events were grouped into the following categories:

1. Relational
2. Work Related
3. Educational
4. Personal
5. Health Related

Table 1 shows the categories together with the raw number of events in each. The percentages demonstrate the proportion of the total number of critical events accounted for by each individual category.

TABLE 1

Categories of Perceived Critical Events

Category	Number	Percentage
Relational	250	40%
Work Related	101	16%
Educational	98	16%
Personal	72	12%
Health Related	42	7%
Other	61	10%
Total	624	101%

Relational

The relational category includes all events in which the primary focus involved a relationship between the woman and another person. In those events coded as relational, the major emphasis, as the woman described the event in the interview, was her relationship with another person. The relational category included relationships with a variety of other persons, most of whom were immediate family members. Friendships with members of the same and of the other sex were also mentioned.

The relational category is by far the largest single category, accounting for forty percent of the perceived critical events. Clearly, and not surprisingly, the identity formation process of women is shaped by their relationships with significant persons in their lives. This is probably true for men also. What is interesting, however, is not so much the fact that forty percent of the critical

events involve relationships, but that this percentage is not larger still. Popular theorizing might suggest that most, if not all, of the significant experiences in a woman's life have to do with the self in relation to others. In fact, some would go so far as to suggest that women define themselves solely in terms of relationships with others and that they are dependent upon such relationships and the roles that accompany them for their identities. Such is not the case with this group of women, for whom sixty percent of the events involve areas of their lives other than relationships.

Because of the large number of critical events within the relational category, it was divided into prevailing themes to provide more complete insight into the types of relationships that are meaningful in the shaping of woman's identity. A review of the relational critical events revealed that all but six percent (14 single events) could easily be divided into three themes: (1) events involving a relationship with a man (other than in the family of origin); (2) events involving motherhood; and (3) events in the family of origin. Table 2 presents the relational critical events data by themes.

Relationships with a man account for the highest number and percentage of all relational events. Although the great preponderance of these events center on marriage, marital problems and divorce, this theme also includes a variety of relationships other than marriage, in addition to a group of events which really took place in the life of

the woman's husband, but which had such an impact upon her life that she viewed them as having happened to her (five percent of the events in this theme are of such a nature).

TABLE 2

Critical Relational Events

Theme	Number	Percentage
Relationships with men	119	48%
Motherhood	62	25%
Family of origin	55	22%
Other remaining events	14	6%
Total	250	101%

One quarter of the relational events involved motherhood, including particular experiences with children, whether of a positive or negative nature. The majority of these events focus upon the experience of becoming a mother (including adoption).

Events that occurred in the family of origin compose the third relational theme. Family of origin included the family situation(s) in which the woman grew up and such specific events as relationships with parents and other early role models, whether of a positive or negative nature. Included in this theme also is sex bias in the family of origin. These events reveal the subject's early awareness of sexism, frequently involving a childhood experience with a male sibling wherein the subject's goals or accomplishments were devalued in comparison. Although events of this nature are few and account for only three percent of the relational

events, it is noteworthy that some women perceive such events as significant in their identity formation process.

The percentage (22%) of events in the family of origin theme is about the same as that in the motherhood theme. As adults looking back, these women as a group tended to identify relatively few critical events in the family of origin. Apparently these women did not see their identities as having been shaped so much by their original families as by other forces.

Not all of the perceived critical events in the relational category were covered by the three themes. Other types of events included relationships with other women, both of a positive and negative nature, and negative relationships with co-workers (positive relationships with co-workers were not mentioned).

Although the number and percentage of relational events were similar for black and white women and although the position of the relational category vis-à-vis other categories was comparable for both racial groups, the content of the relational events revealed differences. The differences were found in the three themes as well as in the frequency of events composing those themes and will be discussed in the following chapter.

Work Related

The next two categories, work related and educational, exemplify the achievement-oriented facets of woman's identity. Table 1 shows the categories of work-related and educational

events following the relational category in terms of frequency. Both represent sixteen percent each and together make up thirty-two percent of the total number of critical events. When combined and viewed as events relating to the fulfillment of achievement needs, the number of perceived critical events, although not equaling the number of events in the relational category, does approximate it. For these women, the active, achieving modes are as important as the relational, a finding which both confirms and is confirmed by other studies of educated women.

The data for critical work-related events are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Critical Work-Related Events

	Number	Percentage
Volunteer	9	9%
First job	37	37%
Changing jobs	9	9%
Quitting work	8	8%
Returning to work	7	7%
Tension -- work/family	18	18%
Difficulties in work environment	7	7%
Unemployment	3	3%
Retirement	3	3%
Total	101	101%

A woman's first job and tension between work and family are the two major events in this category, with the others assuming positions of lesser but approximately equal positions in the hierarchy. The work-family tension might have been predicted, but the importance attached to the first job is indeed interesting. There is a sense in which the first job constitutes entrance into the adult world. More often than not, the first job provides the resources for economic autonomy, which for most persons is crucial to the achievement of emotional autonomy. Finally, the first job is frequently the repository of hopes and dreams, many of which may never be realized, but which seem possible at the moment of the first job.

Educational

Ninety-eight critical events were coded as educational. The importance of this category in terms of frequency of events is comparable to the work category but contains three fewer events.

The number and percentages for types of events coded as educational are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Critical Educational Events

	Number	Percentage
Elementary-secondary	10	10%
College	34	35%
Returning to school	39	40%
Quitting school	4	4%
Women's Studies	11	11%
Total	98	100%

Of greatest importance in the educational category were events involving the woman's returning to school after some period of absence. Almost one-half (40%) of the educational events concern returning to school. Although there is variation in the length of time the woman had been out of school, two motivational patterns dominated the reasons for returning to school. These women made the decision to return to school either for career-related reasons (job preparation, job change or job advancement) or because of the need for intellectual stimulation.

That returning to school is so important in the woman's identity formation process is not surprising, since doing so requires the decision to assert oneself, to pursue one's own goals, to change the direction of one's life. For many women, the return to school is a time when new adaptive skills and capacities must be developed. Not only does the return to school frequently necessitate role adjustments for the woman within the family and sometimes in the community as well, but it also requires the assumption of new (or rusty) role behaviors and entrance into a world of different and often conflicting expectations. For the woman who has been a full-time homemaker for some period of her life, the decision to return to school is also a way of taking on the world and of engaging herself in an atmosphere which is frequently competitive. She puts herself on the line in a way that only occurs through ventures into new, unknown and sometimes alien and frightening areas of endeavor.

Experiences in college accounted for an additional thirty-five percent of the educational events. Considering that eighty-five percent of the women studied hold at least a college degree, it is not surprising that experiences relating to their education were important to their identity formation process. An additional ten percent of the events concerned experiences at either the elementary or secondary level.

Four percent of the events concerned quitting school for reasons such as marriage, pregnancy and childbirth, child rearing, illness or financial need. Clearly, quitting school is not nearly so important as the decision to return to school for these women.

One of the particularly noteworthy and interesting findings of this investigation is the frequency of educational events that relate to experiences in Women's Studies programs. Eleven percent of the educational events involved a Women's Studies programs. That this type of experience is perceived as having an important bearing on the shaping of one's identity as a woman is not surprising, since for many women such programs of study are pursued as a means of exploring personal issues. Some women experience a compelling intellectual need to understand the how and why of sex-role development and sexism in its many forms. They seek the political and socio-cultural roots of their condition in various disciplines such as history, anthropology, psychology, literature and the arts, seeking themselves through the common experiences of womanhood. The findings of this study indicate that in addition to their academic value, Women's Studies programs play an important role in the identity formation process of their students.

Personal

The personal category contains twelve percent of the total perceived critical events. However, events coded under this category are particularly interesting because for the most part they appear to represent internal as opposed to external happenings. That is, these events tend to be occurrences which took place within the woman and which involve her thoughts and feelings about herself and her own life. Table 5 presents the data for the events in this category.

TABLE 5

Critical Personal Events

	Number	Percentage
Need for independence, freedom, career	13	18%
Lack of fulfillment in married life	25	35%
Fear of incompetence, insecurity	4	6%
Nervous breakdown, seriously confused	6	8%
Awareness through support groups	6	8%
Body image	4	6%
Re-evaluation of self, decision to assert self	14	19%
Total	72	100%

A general lack of fulfullment in married life is the most prominent type of event. Lack of fulfillment was sometimes described as boredom in the marriage or with the traditional wife/mother role. However, in these events, the difficulties were related not to the behavior or attitudes of the woman's husband or children, but rather to her own sense of needing something more or different out of life.

Closely related to the lack of fulfillment in married life are events involving the need for independence, freedom and/or a career. Eighteen percent of the events in the personal category focus primarily on such needs. It may very well be that the psycho-social dynamics being expressed through these two types of events are really the same or similar, or that they are two ways of perceiving the same phenomena. In the first instance the emphasis is upon what is needed, presumably to make up for the lack.

The third important type of personal event involved events relating to the re-evaluation of self, to the decision to assert self or change some part of one's life. As these events were described during the interviews, the processes being referred to involved a change not so much in the external circumstances of the woman's life as in her personal perceptions of herself. These events also contain an emphasis on taking charge of one's life, exerting control and power over the future course of one's existence. Obviously these are critical turning points in the identity formation process and for some of the women in our study, the evaluation and clarification of life goals were meaningful

regardless of the consequences (i.e., regardless of what the woman was or was not able to do subsequently). The change in outlook from being powerless to being powerful was critical.

Other events coded under the personal category included fears and feelings of incompetence, insecurity, immaturity and dependence; serious confusion sometimes manifest in emotional breakdowns, suicide attempts, or religious crises; changes in body image; and awarenesses achieved through support groups.

Viewed as a whole, the events in the personal category may represent a continuum showing the internal dynamics associated with the awareness that "something is wrong." Some responses are more adaptive than others. On the least adaptive end of the continuum would be responses such as emotional breakdowns, suicide attempts, confusion, etc., progressing through an awareness of lack of fulfillment and the need for independence and culminating in the re-evaluation of self and the decision to act.

It is also probable that some of the psychological dynamics of these personal events were also present in those events coded under other categories. For example, returning to school or terminating a relationship was probably preceded by an awareness of some unmet need. The important point here is that for those events coded as personal, it was the internal experience itself, the awareness of some lack or need for change, which the woman perceived to be the critical event. This contrasts with the other categories, where the events were the consequence of previous internal processes.

Health Related

Events involving the health of the woman or of significant others in her life accounted for seven percent of the total number of critical events and composed the smallest of the five categories. The data for health-related events are presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6

Critical Health-Related Events

	Number	Percentage
Illness of self	22	52%
Illness/death of significant other	19	45%
Abortion	1	2%
Total	42	99%

Events relating to matters of health were separated depending upon whether they pertained to the woman herself or to a significant other person in her life. The percentage of events relating to illness of self slightly exceeded that for illness (and death) of significant others.

A review of those interviews which contained critical events relating to health indicated that the types of illnesses described were severe, long term and required major adjustments in lifestyle. Examples include a variety of gynecological problems, cancer, heart attack, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis.

Serious illness forced these women to face their own vulnerability and limitations and to re-order their priorities.

For many, illness became the occasion for "putting myself first," a stance that was contradictory to previous views of self.

Although the health-related category is the smallest category, it does represent a definite force in the shaping of woman's identity. It may be that in the future health-related events will become even more critical as more and more persons not only live longer but also live with prolonged illness. For many women, the care of terminally ill parents or other older adults in the family has become a reality of their lives.

Other Critical Events

Earlier in this chapter it was mentioned that sixty-one (10%) of the critical events obtained during the interviews did not appear to fall easily into any one of the five categories. Those events are presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7

Other Critical Events

	Number	Percentage
Moving, traveling	27	44%
Sexism	21	34%
Racism	13	21%

The three types of events included are both important and interesting in enabling us to grasp the total picture of the identity formation process as it was revealed by the women in these interviews.

Twenty-seven events relating to moving or traveling at some time during the woman's life were identified. Some idea of the importance of this type of event may be obtained by viewing it in the context of other critical events which have already been discussed. For example, in terms of frequency, events related to moving and traveling are about as important as illness of self (health-related category).

Moving and traveling frequently involve exposure to new social environments, mores and values. As such they become an occasion for the questioning of previously held notions about self and about the conduct and meaning of human life.

Some of the moving events concern a husband's job transfer. In addition to the trauma of moving in general, this type of move was particularly significant for many women in that it reinforced their second-class citizenship within the marriage. It was assumed that a woman would disrupt her life to move in pursuit of her husband's goals and that her involvement in the community, her career or her friendships were just not as important.

Moving and traveling, whatever the motivation, call forth new adaptive skills from the individual. Further, they demand the integration of new information about the world and about the self. The exposure to other ways of life expanded the woman's perspective of her own life and world.

Events relating to discrimination and attitudes of prejudice are also a small but important force in the shaping

of woman's identity. Thirty-four such events were mentioned, with twenty-one involving sexism and thirteen racism. This frequency of thirty-four events is identical to the critical events experienced in college (educational category). The occurence of these two types of events raises the question of the degree to which the awareness of oneself as a second-class citizen and the resolution of the feelings born in the wake of that realization are a part of the identity formation process of persons who have been relegated to second-class positions in society. For some persons, indeed for these women, the personal experience of sexism and/or racism was an event of such magnitude that they perceived it to be critical in the shaping of their identities.

These data substantiate that events of a prejudicial nature do in fact influence the individual's identity formation process as one's position in the universe and the corresponding limitations upon functioning and aspirations are made painfully clear.

In this chapter, the critical events by categories have been discussed in rank order by frequency. However, another way of considering these data is in terms of the individual events themselves, regardless of the category into which they were coded. Those single critical events which occurred the most often, irrespective of category, have been selected and will be presented with corresponding percentages. In this case, the percentage has been calculated from the total number of critical events.

Coded under the five basic categories were forty-two types of events. To these must be added three more types of events--moving/traveling, sexism and racism. Of all the events reported, which were mentioned most frequently?

Table 8 presents the individual events in descending order of frequency. The percent of the total critical events which is accounted for by the individual event is also presented.

TABLE 8

Individual Event	Number	Percentage
Motherhood	41	7%
Returning to school	39	6%
Marriage	38	6%
First job	37	6%
College	34	5%
Marital difficulties	33	5%
Moving, traveling	27	4%
Lack of fulfillment in marriage	25	4%
Sexism	21	3%

Presenting the data in this form accentuates some conclusions which were suggested briefly in the body of this chapter.

1. The most obvious conclusion from reviewing these data is that there are no single events which are critical to the identity formation process of all women. Although

motherhood was the single event mentioned most often, less than half the women with children identified it as critical in shaping their identities.

2. These data would seem to refute the popular assumption that women define themselves primarily in terms of their relationships with others and in particular through the role of wife and mother. While relational events are certainly important, by no means do they account for the majority of events. We might well be more impressed by the number and proportion of events which have to do with areas of life and experiences other than relationships.

3. The reader is struck by the seemingly equal importance attached to events of a relational nature and to events of an achievement nature. This balance was first observed in the basic categories, with relational events accounting for two hundred and fifty events and achievement events (work-related and educational) accounting for one hundred and ninety-nine events. The balance between these two major parts of the self--the capacity to work and the capacity to love, as Freud originally viewed them--is seen again and more clearly in examining the top individual critical events in Table 8. If indeed these two spheres of human activity really define being an adult, the women in this study not only partake of both the productive and the relational, but also perceive the contribution of each area to the shaping of their identities.

But these data may also be viewed in another way. Since in many ways the expectations for each type of activity are different and often conflicting, and since both areas are so

important to these women, potential conflict now and in the future may be predicted. It may very well be that the feeling of being torn in two directions, each of which is perceived as being equally important to one's identity, is a state which is and will be a part of women's lives for some time to come. This is all the more reason that members of the helping professions must be prepared to help women manage the conflicts that arise from a society that makes the pursuit of a fully adult human identity difficult for those of the female sex.

The identity formation process is ongoing and for most healthy adults the universe of meanings which make up their identities is both stable and changing. Change must occur in the healthy, mature and growing adult; and critical events are grist for the mill, the occasions for stretching toward preciously unimagined dimensions of self. However, change cannot be too rapid, lest it overwhelm and disrupt the stability of identity.

For women at this point in history, the circumstances of their lives are changing very rapidly. On the one hand, the real, external world is changing. Families are smaller, homes are easier to manage, the cost of living demands two wage earners, job alternatives for women are increasing. The changes in society are real--perhaps too slow for the expectations of some, perhaps too rapid for the adaptive capacities of others, but none would dispute that such changes are real and here to stay. On the other hand, women themselves are changing in terms of their perceptions of themselves and of the world in which they live and contribute.

The changes in the roles and responsibilities of women today are clearly reflected in the types of critical events reported by the subjects in this investigation. Members of the helping professions will recognize many of those critical events, for often the confusion, fear and anxiety generated by them are sufficiently severe to require professional assistance. Members of the helping professions have sometimes been thought of as midwives at the birth of identity. The successful and productive resolution of critical events in the identity formation process in fact becomes the occasion for the birthing of new capacities and competencies. In a sense, critical events in the lives of women clients are critical times for their counselors and therapists as well. The response of the helping professional can either reinforce debilitating sex-role stereotypes, thereby robbing the woman of the precious opportunity to move toward self-determination, or facilitate the pushing back of limits and the rebirth of identity. In Part III we will present five vignettes of women at critical turning points in their lives, together with a consideration of a variety of counseling responses deemed effective in fostering the client's growth toward self-determination.

Chapter Five

RACIAL DIFFERENCES

What kinds of critical events have been influential in shaping the identity of black women? Do these events differ from those reported by white women, and if so, how? How might the dual status of race and sex affect identity formation? This chapter addresses these and similar questions by comparing the types and frequencies of critical events described by black and white women. Specifically, this chapter will discuss differences in critical events reported by white and black women based on the data from our study and will interpret these data in light of related research from the social sciences.

The black woman's identity is influenced by a complex interplay of dynamics that are both racially and sexually based. Writers and researchers all too frequently view the phenomenon of the black woman through the separate focuses of race on one hand and sex on the other. This tends to produce a fragmented picture of black women. Black women constitute a unique gestalt, a synthesis of characteristics, some racial, some sexual, some emerging from other factors, which has yet to be understood and appreciated. In this study, black women speak for themselves and describe the critical events in the process of their identity formation.

A common pattern of critical events shared by black and white women is reflected by similar percentages of events in the five categories. While there are thematic differences within categories, both racial groups show general agreement in the overall influence of each category. This pattern of similarity points to shared experiences shaping the identity of women regardless of race.

Relational

A total of two hundred fifty, or forty percent, of all critical events were reported in the relational category, which involved events occurring between the woman and one or more significant others. The percentage of reported events was about the same for white and black women, but there were different themes apparent within each racial group. Events occurring with members of the immediate, nuclear family were mentioned more frequently by white women; events occurring with members of the family of origin were mentioned more frequently by black women.

Over one-half of all relational events reported by white women centered on their relationships with men and in particular with their spouses, as compared with about one-third of all relational events reported by black women. Further, white women identified events (especially difficulties) with their children at a percentage rate more than twice that of their black peers. In contrast, black women presented events concerning the family of origin at a percentage almost four times that of white women, indicating higher response in events relating to role models and to difficulties with parents.

There are at least three possible reasons to account for this dissimilarity in type of family influence between white and black women. First, demographic data show that the black women are younger and are more often unmarried as compared with the white women in our study. A continued linkage with the family of origin is therefore probable for the black women because they have not had as much time to develop and experience the range of interpersonal relationships as older, married women have.

Second, black women as a group may be socialized to place greater importance on the original family because of the interrelated factors of class and culture. Schneider and Smith (1973) found differences between classes of people in a Chicago study: while the middle class stresses the solidarity of the nuclear family unit and in particular the alliance between wife and husband, the lower class emphasizes the solidarity of an entire kinship system and in particular the alliance between mother and child. For black people, the tradition of kinship patterns and the mother-child alliance extends to some African cultures that were matrifocal in nature. In some instances, the lineage and status of the child were traced through the mother's family. In various African societies, women were even a part of the political structure of the communities and were credited with the founding of cities and small states (Staples, 1973). Dependence on the original family and especially on the woman as the primary maternal model was further encouraged in this country through slavery. Staples describes the economic and psychological influences imposed on the slave community which led to the

emergence of a forced prominence of the black woman within the slave system. The woman's role was additionally elevated by slaveowners who required members of the kinship group to receive food and other life necessities from selected female slaves (Yorburg, 1974). Whatever role the authority figure permitted the black woman in her community, however, the status of black people as a whole remained subordinate to that of the dominant culture. Even though the black women in this study are in the middle-income level, their reliance on a kinship system in which the mother is primary reflects the long-standing familial patterns and dynamics of class status.

Third, at least two kinds of socialization patterns may encourage white women to value the nuclear family over the family of origin. One type, acknowledging the predominant middle-class tradition of most white people in this country, is based on Schneider and Smith's (1973) assertion that the middle class tends to emphasize the primacy of the nuclear family and the significance of the spousal relationship. These authors further contend that the middle class actually values an independence from the original family and other kinship systems. Another kind of socialization process is grounded in research that suggests that white women, more than black women, are inclined to place greater emphasis on a "patriarchal ideology." This means that white women tend to hold higher opinions of men than of themselves. In our study, the implication is that some white women may be socialized away from the influence of the original family and toward the influence of their spouses. For example,

Turner and Turner (1974) found that among separate groups of black and white college men and women, white women were the only group to consistently rate the other sex more positively than their own. Thus, white women may be more strongly linked to the importance of the nuclear family due to factors of class and to an idealized notion of men in particular.

In summary, white women seem more influenced by relational events within the nuclear family, events involving spouses and children. Black women, on the other hand, seem more influenced by relational events within the original family, with parents and other early role models. The variance in family influence may be interpreted through a combination of factors, including demographic features of the racial groups in this study, as well as difference in sex-role patterns affected by class tradition and race. Some of these sex-role issues will be examined further in this chapter.

Work Related

A total of one hundred and one, or sixteen percent, of all critical events involved those pertaining to work experiences. As in the relational area, about an equal percentage of critical events was reported by white and black women. While events associated with the first job and with work-family tension were of major and about equal importance to members of both racial groups, differences were noted in other areas. Events mentioned more often by white women included quitting

work; events mentioned more frequently by black women included changing jobs and difficulties on the job.

Variance in these theme areas may stem from racial differences in women's motives for employment. Nye and Hoffman (1963) reported a general tendency for women to enter the marketplace in correlation to changes in the husbands' earning level; women work more often when their spouses' salaries decrease or are unstable. It is possible that white women may view their workforce involvement as one that supplements the family income rather than one based primarily on the necessity for family survival. This may help explain why white women identified the option of quitting work more frequently than black women did and may also explain why over two-fifths of the white women were not employed at the time of the study (although they had been working in the past).

The pattern described by Nye and Hoffman does not necessarily apply to black women. Sweet (1973) cited data that show that employment trends for non-white women as a group are not significantly influenced by spouses' earnings; non-white women tend to maintain employment regardless of the husbands' income level. It may be that black women are seldom in positions to consider not working, and that when employed they do not see quitting as a viable option. More often, black women (especially when upwardly mobile, as those in this study were) acquire new skills for promotion or for changing jobs without terminating their current employment altogether. In support, sixteen percent of the work events identified by black women pertained to

changing jobs; no critical events associated with quitting a job were reported.

What accounts for this suggestion of the black woman's strong and continual linkage with the work force? Reports from those who have published in the area point to motivational imperatives grounded in cultural and political realities. Cumulatively, these reasons focus on the black woman's efforts to ensure the survival of her people. The tradition of African societies, for example, required women to be involved in roles outside the family. Oakley (1974) outlines the African woman's contribution to the economic stability of the community. Although some roles were sex-typed, the work of African women was considered to be as essential as the work of men. The activities of both women and men occupied equal status.

Another factor influencing the participation of black women in the labor force is the history of black women in the United States. The black woman as slave had versatile utility. Forced to combine domestic and economic roles, she could bear more slaves, raise the slaveowner's children, work in the master's home, labor in the fields, care for her own family, and allocate goods to others in her community. These roles, in conjunction with the restricted paternal functions permitted the male slave with his family, encouraged an association of the American black woman with survival. The emphasis in African societies on shared status and distribution of tasks between men and women shifted in America to one in which the woman was forced to assume a primary role in the family's survival. Staples (1973) presents a thorough commentary on the evolution and significance

of the woman's role in the black community. He underscores the historical occurrences that have required black women to take on self-reliant roles (including that of economic provider or contributor) that differ from the more subordinate roles ascribed to white women.

Finally, the black woman's participation in the labor force may have been strengthened by the apparent exclusion of black men from regular employment. Black women are weaned on the assumption that married or not, mothers or not, they will work outside the home. This assumption, taught directly or through role modeling, is based on the view that economic dependence on black men is a precarious and unpredictable option and an unfamiliar one for most black women. The black man's role in the marketplace is a restricted one that is subject to a variety of circumstances, including unemployment, underemployment, imprisonment and early death. Epstein (1970) acknowledges the importance of early role models in developing economic self-reliance among black women, a departure from the traditional notion that women are to be dependent on men.

A final theme in the work category of some importance here is that events regarding difficulties on the job were identified more frequently by black women than by white women. The dual impact of being both female and black may increase the black woman's sensitivity to negative work experiences. This awareness of work difficulties may be strengthened even more by a cumulative effect of the historical and systemic patterns described above.

Educational

A total of ninety-eight, or about sixteen percent, of all critical events related to the women's experiences with education. As in the previous categories, about an equal percentage of events was reported by white and black women. The most influential educational event for both groups, although much more so for black women, was returning to school. Other events that have some importance in shaping identity for white women are participation in Women's Studies programs and quitting school. No responses in either of these areas appeared for black women.

The meaning of a higher response rate for returning to school among black women as compared with white women may be framed in a discussion of differences in motivation. The reason stated more frequently in the interviews by white women focused on returning to school as a source of stimulation; the reason stated more frequently by black women centered on preparation for work. Given the culturally based imperative for black women's participation in the work force, it follows that education may be viewed generally in the black community as the key to employment marketability, to success and mobility. As a critical preparatory experience, education is the ticket to viable and secure employment and may be seen as an essential attribute to better insure economic independence. Relatedly, education may be viewed by black women as a means to express high need-achievement values. Several researchers, for example, have found strong motives for success among black women.

Horner (1972) cites differences between white and black, female and male college students. Black women and white men did not fear success as much as white women and black men did. In a study by Weston and Mednick (1972), evidence is also found to suggest that black college women exhibit fewer fear-of-success motives than white college women do. These differences between white and black women may correlate with some of the cultural and economic factors outlined in the work category.

Women's Studies programs may have special meaning for white women who are discovering options from the traditional role of homemaker. Women's groups and programs may also be important to white women since there may not be as much emphasis on support systems within the kinship network as there is among black women.

Events pertaining to elementary and secondary experiences were mentioned more frequently among black women than their white peers. One explanation is that since the black women in this study were younger, they may be closer to events occurring in their lives as children and as young adults.

Personal

Seventy-two, or twelve percent, of all critical events involved women's personal needs and problems. Of the total number of critical events, the percentage of personal experiences reported by white women is higher than that reported by black women (13% and 9%, respectively). Part of the reason for the higher frequency rate among white women may pertain to the much greater reporting of events in the area of general lack of

fulfillment in married life. Events of this nature were identified by white women at more than twice the rate of that by black women. On the other hand, more than twice the rate of events were reported by black than white women in the area of reevaluation of self and the decision to assert oneself.

There are several implications for the strong influence that discontent in the marriage unit seemingly has for white women. A higher percentage of white women (67%) estimate their views on women's roles and rights as different to very different from those of their mothers. These women may therefore experience some degree of role confusion or conflict when entering the marital alliance because of a lack of clearly defined role expectations (and models) from the original family. (The difference in role perceptions between black women and their mothers is much less than for white women.) Some unhappiness may also reflect discontent with the role of homemaker, especially if the woman is unemployed. Nye and Hoffman (1963) cite research indicating that married women may seek employment as a response to boredom, frustration and the monotony of household tasks and child rearing (among other reasons). Media and social influences implying that women should look outside the home for personal fulfillment may further exacerbate the predicament. Moreover, dissatisfaction in the marriage may be due to the subordinate role to which some white women are relegated in the home. If the woman is not in the work force, she is particularly vulnerable to the sex-role ideology that stipulates dominance of men over women, a situation more likely when the woman is economically dependent upon her spouse.

In the personal category of critical events, the major theme reported by black women was a cluster of experiences described as re-evaluation of self or the decision to assert self. For these black women, the process of re-evaluating themselves and their goals and the subsequent decision to act was identified as a turning point in their lives. The emphasis projected in the interviews was on self-evaluation and self-direction, and calls forth an image of a woman sitting at her kitchen table saying, "Now, just where am I going and how am I going to get there?" or "It's time to do something about my life and this is what I will do." The research of Horner (1972), Staples (1973), Turner and Turner (1974) and Epstein (1973) documents the self-reliance and self-directedness of black women and appears to be further supported by data from this study.

The process of self-evaluation may also be viewed as a consequence of the independent posture black women have been "forced" to adopt for the culturally based reasons described previously. In some instances, however, the independence may be accompanied by fears, which may account for why eleven percent of the events reported by black women focus on fear of incompetence and other feelings of insecurity. Fears of this nature may be expected in light of the literature showing high motives for success among black women.

Finally, there are percentage differences between black and white women in events pertaining to body image, although the actual number of events is too small to warrant interpretation.

Health Related

Of the total number of all critical events, forty-two, or seven percent, involved events relating to the health of the women or of significant others in her life. About an equal percentage of events was reported by white and black women, although different themes appeared once again. Illness of self was mentioned with greater frequency by white women; illness or death of significant others was identified more often by black women.

The significance placed on the extended family is a major consideration for understanding why black women viewed the illness or death of significant others as critical events in their lives. About three-fourths of all health events reported by black women fall within this theme area. As discussed under the relational category, cultural and class dynamics have shaped strong kinship patterns for members of the black community. This network, generated by African tradition and required in this country for genotypical survival, stresses the importance of support systems. When these systems are disrupted by serious illness or death, black women may sense not only a personal loss but some threat to the overall stability of the functioning family unit and their own identities as well. The death of a great-aunt who has served as babysitter, for example, may have serious implications for the single parent who is both in school and employed. Religion may also be a part of some black women's views on death or dying; fifty percent of the black women report

religion as a very important aspect of their lives, as compared with twenty-seven percent of the white women interviewed.

About two-thirds of the events in the health category for white women concerned illness of self. As described in Chapter Four, the illnesses reported were serious, long term and potentially terminal, necessitating drastic adjustments in self-perception, role definition and lifestyle. Without question, the experience of such an illness will be a turning point in the life of any adult. What is interesting here is that this particular event, illness of self, appeared to be more critical for white than for black women. Either the black women interviewed in this study have not experienced serious illness with the same frequency as the white women, perhaps because of their overall younger ages, or such illnesses simply have not been as disruptive to their sense of who they are as they have been for white women.

One of the effects of serious illness, as reported by the women in this study, was the re-ordering of priorities and the recognition of personal limitations and vulnerabilities. Survival required "putting myself first," described as a difficult and painful process, perhaps more so for white women, whose socialization process was more likely to prohibit such a posture. Thus the emotional and psychological adjustments required in the face of serious illness may be greater for white than for black women and therefore may result in such events being perceived as turning points in their identity formation process.

Summary

This chapter differentiated patterns of critical events between white and black women in this study. Results indicated that in general both groups of women reported similar event categories as being important to their identities. Women of both races reported about an equal percentage of events in the relational, work-related, educational and health-related areas. A higher percentage of events was identified by white women in the personal category. While in most instances white and black women shared similar experiences in their lives, specific differences between racial groups emerged from the data. Looking only at these differences, two profiles typify the kinds of women in this study. The white woman is more influenced by the nuclear family and by events associated with quitting work. She is more likely to be motivated to return to school for self-stimulation, and is affected by events in the marital alliance as well as by those relating to her own illness. The black woman is more influenced by the original family and by events pertaining to changing jobs and to difficulties in the work setting. She is more likely to return to school as preparation for employment, and is affected by self-evaluation experiences as well as by events relating to the illness or death of significant others. Research cited points to an interaction of historical, psycho-social, cultural, class and sex-role patterns that combine to

determine variance in the identity formation processes of black and white women.

What can black and white women learn from each other to enhance the quality of their lives? From white women, we see the promise of change, the challenge of moving from the rigidity of sex-role ascription to the evolution of self. Inherent within this transition is the white woman's sense of struggle for self-fulfillment as well as the alignment of this goal with the need for fulfillment through her family. She is emerging - discovering the opportunity for autonomy and, gently, testing the assigned boundaries that have limited her developmental space. Her metamorphosis involves stretching the traditional role of woman to encompass personhood, and it is through this process that we see her strength. As she dares to risk, we are alerted to the power of her potential.

From the black woman, we see the impact of a history that is characterized by the will to survive. Nourished by those who have come before her, the black woman teaches us about a sense of groundedness. She embodies a collection of cultural experiences that have encouraged self-reliance, resilience and an allegiance to her community. She reminds us about the legitimacy of trusting oneself and shows us that multiple roles are within reach. As is the case with her white sister, the black woman is also in the process of struggle. She is exploring the option of choice.

While the pathways of self-discovery are different for black and white women, their journeys are marked by commonality of purpose. Both groups share the process of becoming--not in accordance with sex-role patterns established by tradition or necessity, but on the basis of the right to become.

P A R T III

THE COUNSELING RESPONSES

Chapter Six

METHODOLOGY

Women turn to members of the helping professions when the critical events in their lives are experienced as disruptive and threatening to their present definitions of themselves. They bring confusion with them about who and what they are and should be, pain and frequently anger, and the inability to make sense out of what is happening to them. How might the helping professions best respond? What kinds of strategies, approaches and techniques are most effective in increasing a woman's growth toward competency and independence at the very moments when those qualities seem threatened? Which are the issues to be attended to in the counseling relationship and how are these issues most effectively conceptualized? These questions will be addressed in Part III. Methodology is discussed in this chapter, followed in Chapter Seven by the presentation of counseling responses to the five vignettes.

On the basis of the interview material, five vignettes were composed depicting individual women in critical situations. Although the vignettes are composites, they were designed to be typical of women who frequently seek the services of helping professionals. The vignettes were screened for authenticity by five counseling psychologists as well as by members of the project staff and were subsequently modified in accordance with their recommendations.

In attempting to identify those counseling/therapeutic approaches, strategies, and techniques most likely to facilitate a woman's growth toward self-determination at critical times in her life, it was first necessary to determine how to locate specific kinds of knowledge. In any community or organization, certain persons are known and recognized as possessing expertise on particular matters and sensitivity to particular issues. It was our belief that there presently exists a growing number of helping professionals who indeed not only possess advanced knowledge of the psychosocial dynamics of women's lives, but are also highly skilled practitioners, rich in experience with a variety of women clients. It was our intention to tap the knowledge of those particular practitioners in such a way that their expertise as counselors of women could be shared with the mainstream of the helping professions.

Through recommendations from professional colleagues or from directors of agencies and centers, thirty-five members of the helping professions were identified on the basis of their reputations as expert counselors of women. In some instances these persons were helping professionals whose reputations were recognized by community groups such as the Y.W.C.A., crisis centers or women's centers and who were used as referral sources by staff members in these organizations.

The helping professionals interviewed were drawn from the areas of Detroit, Chicago, East Lansing and Berrien County, Michigan. Persons recommended to be interviewed

were contacted by a member of the project staff, who explained to them the nature of the project and their potential role in it. Interviewees were sent materials about the project as well as copies of the five vignettes to read and reflect on prior to the actual interview.

The demographic characteristics of this group of interviewees indicate that effective counselors of women may be found in a wide variety of service settings. Furthermore, their professional training and theoretical orientations reflect the spectrum of alternatives presently available within the helping professions.

Of the thirty-five helping professionals interviewed, twelve were male and twenty-three were female. Working experience ranged from three to thirty years, for an average of eleven years. The interviewees were asked to approximate the length of their experience in treating women, including individual counseling/therapy, groups and special programs. For this type of experience the average was nine years, with a range of one to twenty-five years. The professionals in our investigation devoted approximately fifty-three percent of their time to individual counseling/therapy, and approximately seventeen percent to group treatment or special programs.

Interviewees were asked to specify the demographic characteristics of their women clients, including age, race religion, educational level and socioeconomic level. The responses indicated experience with women from a variety of

backgrounds, with the exception of race, for which two-thirds of the interviewees indicated that their women clients were predominantly white.

Professionals in private practice accounted for eighteen percent of the interviewees, fifty-nine percent were employed by an agency, and twenty-four percent were employed by an agency in addition to maintaining some private practice. Of those employed by an agency, forty-eight percent were employed by publicly funded agencies, sixteen percent by privately supported agencies, and thirty-five percent by agencies which receive some combination of both public and private funds. The types of employing agencies were representative of the various sources of help to be found in most communities. Thirty-nine percent of the interviewees were employed by education-related agencies and, in particular, by university counseling centers. Fifteen percent were employed by social service agencies. Community mental health centers accounted for forty-two percent of the employing agencies.

Interviewees were asked to indicate their highest academic degrees as well as other types of professional training. The distribution was as follows:

Doctorate	20%
M.S.W.	31%
M.A.	40%
B.A.	9%
	100%

Additional training was varied and included (in descending order of frequency) gestalt therapy, transactional analysis, reality therapy, hypnosis, family therapy, group therapy, organizational management, assertiveness training, bioenergetics and the treatment of sexual dysfunction.

Although forty-six percent of these helping professionals described themselves as eclectic or using a combination of counseling/therapeutic approaches, others identified themselves with a particular theoretical orientation, including (in descending order of frequency) client-centered, psychoanalytic, reality, transactional analysis, behavioral, feminist and gestalt approaches to counseling and therapy.

Several interesting sex differences were found in the responses to the vignettes by the helping professionals interviewed. First, men were more likely to ask for more information than was provided in the vignette and appeared to be initially reluctant to respond to the vignettes as written. Second, male interviewees were more likely to focus, at least initially, on the relational dimensions of the women depicted in the vignettes, raising questions regarding marriage and children, and they appeared to believe that identity issues related to the wife/mother role must be at least partially resolved before other identity issues could be explored. Women interviewees, on the other hand, were more likely to accept and readily respond to the information in the vignettes as written, as well as to focus immediately on the issues raised (or suggested) by the women in the vignettes.

Of the thirty-five helping professionals interviewed, twenty were interviewed in small groups. Most often group interviews included members of the staff of one agency or center. While there were some differences between the information obtained through the group interviews and that obtained through individual interviews, the differences do not appear to be sufficient to warrant separate discussion of the results. As might be predicted, the group interviews tended to produce less controversial material, less diversity of opinion, and to reflect a need to reach consensus regarding the management of the vignette under consideration. However, the types of issues identified and the counseling approaches suggested in the group interviews did not differ substantially from the information obtained through individual interviews.

In addition to providing material for this handbook, the group interview also functioned as a professional development activity. Although similar to a case conference, the group interview provided an opportunity for staff members to compare perceptions of the five potential clients described in the vignettes and subsequently to identify common themes and issues in counseling women.

Participants described the group interview as stimulating and productive of professional growth for themselves as counselors of women. Particularly exciting was the sharing (and sometimes demonstration) of approaches or techniques drawn from a variety of theoretical orientations. In addition, the issues raised by the five vignettes caused participants to recognize and consider their assumptions about

women. Group interview participants indicated their desire for more discussions of this nature with their colleagues as part of ongoing professional development. The response of the participants to the group interviews strongly suggests the value of using the vignettes in staff development activities, in-service training, and as course material for the preparation of future members of the helping professions.

Although the five vignettes were initially screened for authenticity, interviewees were also asked if they thought each of the vignettes was true to life, believable and typical. This was particularly important information since, as was indicated above, the interviewees were counselors and therapists known for their expertise in working with women. With few exceptions, the interviewees found the vignettes to be not only believable but quite typical of the women they see in counseling/therapy.

Minor points about the Joan vignette were raised by three male therapists questioning the believability of her situation as described in the vignette. Additionally, interviewees from community mental health facilities felt they had little experience with clients such as "Rita," and that "Rita" would not be as likely to seek help from a community mental health center as from a university counseling center, a women's center or a therapist in private practice. Finally, several interviewees stated that a career other than computer programming would have strengthened the Carol vignette, since

the current availability of such positions would seem to ensure employment.

The counseling responses of the thirty-five interviewees to each of the five vignettes have been organized and will be discussed as follows:

1. Issues to be attended to during counseling/therapy, including other areas of information about the client deemed necessary for treatment;
2. Recommended approaches, strategies and techniques (as well as those to be avoided), including the use of referral and other community resources.

In presenting the material, we have attempted to capture the essence or flavor of the responses. Similar issues and approaches identified by several persons have been indicated. However, in some instances, when a particular issue or approach was mentioned by only one or two persons but seemed to us to be unique, interesting and potentially effective, we have incorporated these as good ideas.

In the following discussions of counseling responses to the five vignettes, it is not our intention to present a cook-book approach with precise directions for counseling these five women. Such an approach would be antithetical to the practice of counseling and psychotherapy. Rather, it is our intention to sketch the consensus of the interviewees, so that the material has relevance for a wide variety of practitioners who may have little in common with each other except the desire to increase their understanding of and sensitivity to the needs of their women clients.

Chapter Seven

FINDINGS

Five vignettes and the corresponding responses are presented here in the order and form in which they were originally discussed by the thirty-five helping professionals. Names have been given to the five women not only for ease in discussion, but also to make the vignettes more realistic. The names are, of course, fictitious.

Pat

Pat feels that the role of woman is to get married and have children. The wife/mother should stay home, at least until the children are grown. She loves and respects her husband, who works hard to keep the family financially secure.

Her problem is that she feels depressed and listless, but doesn't know why. The depression is made worse by feelings of guilt and selfishness. She feels she has everything she ever wanted, so she asks, "Why am I so unhappy? There must be something wrong with me." Her husband was initially supportive but has grown irritated at her continuing depression, especially since neither he nor she can find a reason for it.

She comes to you for help.

* * *

Almost all the therapists saw Pat as a typical client: the woman with traditional views and values seeking therapy, feeling listless and depressed, questioning her feelings of guilt and selfishness, and shaken by her husband's waning support and growing irritability. One counselor indicated, "Seventy percent of the women I see are like Pat," while a group of practitioners from a community center stated, "We had sixteen Pats. . . . We put them all together in a group, . . . a woman's awareness group."

Issues to Attend To

There was general agreement as to the major issues which Pat and the therapist must address, focusing primarily on the complexities of depression. Fully exploring the source of the depression in the early stages of therapy is paramount and must occur before any real progress can be made toward its positive resolution. As emphasized by a community center clinician, "It is important to get to the depth of the depression," even though such exploration is often a slow and painful process. If the counselor determines that the depression is grief related, or that suicidal tendencies exist, the counseling strategy must respond appropriately. Also important during this exploratory process is the investigation of Pat's feelings of guilt and selfishness, for they may be contributing significantly to her general depressed state. Directing attention to her value and belief system may prove beneficial; some clarification and redefinition may be necessary if Pat wants to maintain her traditional identity. On the other hand, Pat may discover that her unhappiness is based

on a lifestyle which is no longer fulfilling, and she may want to explore other options and directions. One practitioner commented that should this be the case, the counselor must explore the question, "If she wants out, what does she want?" Having Pat reflect on her past may provide valuable insight into her present feelings and perceptions about her role as wife, mother, and woman. One therapist suggested focusing on ". . . her childhood dreams of adulthood . . . who were her role models? As a child, what did she want for her future as opposed to what she has? What was fun yesterday and what is fun today?" Many therapists stressed the importance of determining other influencing factors such as the degree to which the ages and developmental stages of Pat's children may be influencing her stress level; marital and family problems; medication; and the possibility of a physiological disorder.

Counseling Approaches

The therapists recommended a diversity of counseling strategies for working with clients such as Pat, whose personal identities are disrupted by conflict between the cognitive and affective domains. All of the approaches, however, were predicated on a thorough exploration of the causal factors contributing to the depression. For Pat, lack of involvement may be the primary variable affecting her unhappiness, and if so, the counselors agreed that it would be necessary for her to become active, either in or outside the home. One therapist felt that Pat might have a spontaneous recovery, "see the light and get right back on her feet." However, most felt that the counselor should be patient, for

Pat needs time to release her pain and express her true feelings of frustration, anger, and helplessness. Imperative is a supportive counseling atmosphere, one in which Pat can question her traditional orientation and values, search for a sense of direction, and redefine her life through examining all of the options available to her. As the counselor works with Pat, he/she must employ a careful balance of sensitivity and confrontation if Pat is to make maximum progress toward self-determination and a positive self-image. Involvement in meaningful activities outside the home, such as volunteer or community work, should be encouraged, for they may provide her with feelings of temporary satisfaction. As a motivational technique, it might be effective to have Pat establish short-term goals or tasks which would allow her to experience immediate success and a sense of self-worth. Examining the possible options available to Pat would be important, as would allowing her to proceed at her own pace in the self-exploration process and within the context of her traditional role definition.

There was difference of opinion among the practitioners as to whether Pat's husband should join her in therapy. Some felt it would be essential to include the husband, since he is so intimately involved in the dynamics of her problem. One therapist commented, "I would want to see the husband regarding his frustrations, friction, and hostility vis-à-vis his change in support." Others, however, felt that the husband should not participate in the treatment until later

in therapy, if at all, because "Pat must learn to think for herself and work out her own problems."

As the helping relationship develops, the professionals agreed, Pat must raise her consciousness to a level where she can accept the fact that women have been conditioned through sex-role socialization to feel guilty and selfish if not satisfied with their position in life. Further, she must understand that caring about herself and her needs is not selfish at all, but is the very foundation upon which mature identity formation is based. As stated by one clinician, "You don't hurt people by meeting your own needs." In a practical sense, Pat needs to realize that her roles as wife and mother need not conflict with the attainment of other goals she may establish for herself. Suggested therapeutic techniques include assertiveness training, Ellis' rational emotive therapy for working on guilt feelings, and Gestalt's empty-chair technique for helping Pat legitimize her needs and rights as an individual. Fantasizing may be useful in enabling Pat to experience alternative roles and situations, express hidden feelings and forgotten dreams, and explore the "empty" areas of her life. One counselor suggested family mapping as a motivating technique; looking at the roles of the women in her family, past and present, might give her strength to pursue new directions and encourage a more objective view of herself. Keeping a journal was mentioned as a technique for validating her feelings. Body work, i.e., learning to move large and small muscles, was suggested as a method for motivating Pat to action and increasing her awareness of self.

Outside Skills and Resources

If Pat is feeling alone and isolated, the counselor may want to refer her to an outside support group, such as a Y.W.C.A. group, where she could explore new relationships and share herself with others in a comfortable setting. In addition, readings about other women in similar situations should be suggested to help her discover that she is not alone.

Cautions and Negative Interventions

When asked what counseling techniques or behaviors could hinder Pat's development, the counselors offered varied responses. Although Pat's depression is the primary focus of attention in the counseling relationship, it is important that the therapist not dwell on these feelings indefinitely. Support must be provided throughout therapy, as the recovery may take considerable time, but caution should be exercised to insure that false hope or promises of an immediate "cure" are avoided. As Pat is encouraged to take active steps in resolving her disrupted sense of well-being, she must be allowed to do so within her own value system. For example, to refer her to consciousness-raising or feminist-oriented groups might threaten her and put her on the defensive. Further, while exploring the reasons for Pat's depression and feelings of dissatisfaction with her life, the counselor must remain cognizant of the traditional woman's need to please and gain approval, and address such behavior if it occurs.

In general, the practitioners agreed that Pat should not be pushed into moving too quickly during therapy. They particularly emphasized the importance of avoiding exploration

of the traditional role as a possible hindrance to her development until such time as Pat is ready to pursue new alternatives. If the counselor feels that assisting Pat in setting goals might be effective during therapy, it would not be useful to encourage her to set unrealistic long-term goals. Throughout therapy, the counselor should avoid using psychological jargon, which would threaten the warmth of the client-therapist relationship, and should beware of viewing and treating Pat's situation simply in terms of the marital relationship. Perhaps the greatest caution expressed by the practitioners was to avoid any sexually biased responses during therapy, for such action could only engender or reinforce feelings of intimidation and inadequacy in the client.

Carol

Carol has always been an achiever and has gotten where she wanted to go. Because of her parents' emphasis on independence and achievement, and because of her success, she has never quite understood what the women's movement is all about. She graduated from college a year ago and has been looking for a job as a systems analyst, for which she is well qualified. She isn't sure, but she feels she is being discriminated against because she is a woman. She finally confronted one prospective employer, who assured her that she was qualified but that there were so many competent persons that she simply lost out. Nevertheless, she has been looking for a job for a year, and she now feels depressed, insecure, confused. Her confidence and self-esteem have been greatly shaken. She reasons that if she were competent, surely someone would have hired her. She concludes: "It would really be ridiculous to discriminate against me just because I am a woman. Maybe there is something wrong with me, and I just don't see it." She was offered a job as a high school math teacher, but she refused the offer since she has no desire to teach. She wonders if she is being too picky and demanding, too impatient to start with less than she wants.

Overall, she comes to you feeling very confused and shaken.

* * *

Carol and her feelings of confusion and frustration were found quite believable by most of the helping professionals, with some readily identifying with a woman's

frustrations in attaining high career goals. One counselor commented, "This one is hard for me. The job market is terrible; believe me, I know."

Issues to Attend To

Among the issues identified by the therapists as crucial, two were discussed most often. They are the problem of discrimination and the realities of career possibilities in today's job market. Because Carol's perceptions of her situation may in fact differ from what is real, it is important that the counselor assist her in differentiating between the two and accepting the reality of discrimination. On the other hand, if the counselor finds that the limited job market is the primary factor prohibiting Carol from reaching her career goal, then perhaps all Carol needs is careful career counseling, together with improved job-hunting skills. "I see the job as the thing that will give her back what she really wants--a sense of competency," said one practitioner. Another said, "She may be too picky. What might be some indirect approaches to her goal?" Any self-defeating behavior must be identified and explored, and the counselor may find that an evaluation of Carol's personal development is warranted. Although the issue was not discussed as often, some therapists suggested that Carol's past be investigated to determine to what extent her parents' emphasis on independence, achievement, failure, and self-worth may be contributing to and affecting Carol's definition of self. Some insight into her insecurities and guilts might result from this kind of exploration. All the interviews focused to some extent on

Carol's self-esteem, as her loss of self-esteem could very well be central to her problems and its restoration the key to the successful resolution of her inner struggle. To what extent is Carol's identity tied to achievement? Does her self-esteem depend solely upon accomplishment? These are fundamental questions which must be explored, and which could open the door to increased awareness and self-understanding. Attention could be directed to the question, "Is the achievement mode just as debilitating as the not-wanting-anything mode?" As one therapist stated, "It appears that when she gets the achievement side of herself shut down, she can't feel OK with the 'being' side." Another commented, "The real issue is frustration, reality based."

Counseling Approaches

In responding to clients such as Carol, the therapists emphasized the importance of maintaining sensitivity to the state of crisis in which the client finds herself, the resolution of which could prove to be a critical turning point in her identity formation process. Perhaps the counselor's primary function in helping Carol should be to build a strong relationship, based on support, reassurance and empathy, and to create an atmosphere which will facilitate maximum personal growth. Several practitioners said they would "give her lots of strokes." The counselor must exhibit patience, allowing Carol the time she needs to sort out her options and examine new possibilities for her personal and professional development. During this exploration process, reinforcing Carol's past successes and supporting her original career plans are

particularly important, even if some redefinition proves necessary. All dimensions of Carol's problem must be considered, for to deal with aspects of her professional or personal selves independently would not allow her to view herself as a whole. The counselor must help Carol face the reality of her situation, while at the same time being sensitive to the terrible disappointment of that reality. As the counselor attends to the presenting issues, he/she must help Carol to regard herself as a valued human being, shore up her self-confidence, and be aware and empathetic to her feelings of fear and anger. Other recommended counseling approaches included role playing and the use of sound and video tapes for examining Carol's skills, should her effectiveness in an interview session be in question. If warranted, assertiveness training could prove effective, in addition to the use of fantasy, where the client fantasizes herself in other jobs, other roles or an interview situation.

Outside Skills and Resources

Most therapists agreed that referral could play a significant role in this counseling relationship. If it is necessary for Carol to restructure her career goals, the counselor might refer her to a career counselor, employment service, or placement office to explore real job possibilities, to increase her knowledge of her chosen field, and to develop her skills. Such referrals could prove particularly successful for Carol if coupled with continued assistance from her therapist as she integrates the information she receives and begins to make decisions about new directions for

her future. If the counselor discovers Carol's internal and external support system to be conflicting or inadequate, encouraging her to join a consciousness-raising group or to participate in group discussions with other women in similar situations might be helpful. Introducing her to women who have successfully resolved similar problems could be very effective. As one therapist mentioned, "Carol is missing out on some of the better things of life, particularly that of enjoying people of her own sex. I have the feeling that she may not identify with anyone but herself, and I would want to help her with this." If Carol tends to be overpersonalizing her problems, literature on the women's movement and employment situation could offer her insight into the problems faced by all women. Referral would also be appropriate if Carol is indeed experiencing discrimination and wishes to consider legal action.

Cautions and Negative Interventions

Because Carol comes to the counselor feeling both confused and insecure, inappropriate or biased actions employed by the counselor could hinder rather than facilitate her personal growth. Carol's problems and feelings are very real and the counselor should be careful not to discount them. As the counselor helps Carol to develop new competencies for growth toward self-determination, words of encouragement and sensitivity to her feelings are essential. It is also important for the counselor to recognize when Carol is playing the "poor-me" game, and he/she must not allow it to continue indefinitely. Carol should not be discouraged, even subtly,

if her non-traditional achievement mode makes the counselor uncomfortable. Such actions could cause Carol to question her expectations and further diminish her self-esteem and confidence by implying that it is her own fault she has not gotten a job. Furthermore, to encourage Carol to take a job in which she would feel dissatisfied or settle for less than that for which she is qualified, simply because she is a woman, could only lead to further frustration and impede her personal development.

Joan

Joan describes herself as having "been through it all." She grew up with the traditional expectations of getting married and living happily ever after. Very soon she became frustrated. Fortunately, her husband was very supportive and encouraged her to develop her own talents. During this time Joan became active in the women's movement. She is presently working as a lawyer in a large firm (she just graduated from law school a couple of years ago). She does not feel discriminated against, but she does feel alone, somewhat sad, and very separate. Although she believes strongly in the type of legal work she hopes to do some day, the rewards are far off and she fears that she will never reach her professional goal. She used to get support from other women in a neighborhood rap group, but now feels cut off from them. Some of these women feel she has sold out and joined the male establishment. Because she no longer has time to picket or attend rallies, they see her as not caring about women. She feels this is not true at all. One reason (besides lack of time) she does not volunteer as much as before is that the women's group tactics now seem to her to be very limited. Feminists, she feels, can be unreasonable and incapable of really listening to other people.

Joan is coming to you simply because she feels she is in a precarious situation; she is somewhat afraid of not having the courage to follow through on what will be a long and lonely struggle. Although her husband is still supportive, she feels terribly alone. Neither her old feminist friends nor

the few women in the law firm have much in common with her. She is afraid, too, that maybe she is asking for too much, that perhaps she still expects things to end up perfectly.

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Issues to Attend To

For Joan, the feelings of loneliness, separateness, and distancing from others were viewed as the primary issues which warrant attention during the counseling relationship. What does "aloneness" mean to Joan? Does the loneliness she is expressing stem from her position in a male-dominated profession, or is it a fact of her life? Are her perceptions of these feelings causing her to isolate herself? Focus must also be placed on the difficulty Joan is having in accepting herself realistically, the perfection she expects in her job performance and her relationships with others. Many practitioners said that identification and exploration of the causal factors of this perfectionism must occur before any personal redefinition can begin. One family therapist commented, "My intuitive feeling is that Joan is holding on to something from earlier in her life. I would go back to family issues and look for messages from childhood about loyalty, achievement, duty, and morality." Joan's strengths must also be identified and attention must be paid to her successes and achievements. To further identify the issues contributing to Joan's disrupted sense of self, several questions may need to be addressed.

Why is Joan a lawyer? Why did she pursue non-traditional roles? Did she make these decisions on her own? Has she really resolved who she is? What rewards is she seeking? What is her "long and lonely" struggle? Further, Joan's expression of fear of never reaching her professional goal warrants attention to determine its source and the extent to which it is disrupting her personal identity. Other therapists suggested that an incongruity seems to exist between Joan's behavior and her attitudes. While she appears to be successfully working toward the achievement of her goals, she is simultaneously questioning her capabilities. The counselor must investigate the underlying reasons for this discrepancy, as well as any resultant anxieties which may exist.

One clinician stressed the importance of exploring Joan's rejection of her feminist friends and the women's movement, and any guilt she may feel related to these issues. The therapist may want to know more about Joan's relationship with her former friends to determine if she has moved as far away from them as she thinks, or if there is a pattern of feeling superior to or using friends. Investigating Joan's relationship with her husband, in terms of his supportive mode and her attitude toward men in general, could be valuable as well, for it might provide insight into the reasons for her present feelings of insecurity. One practitioner indicated that she would want to see the husband "to determine to what extent he is supporting Joan's changes, both overtly and covertly, and the degree to which she may be effecting stress in him."

Counseling Approaches

Most of the practitioners agreed that exhibiting empathy and support would be crucial to the development of a strong, helping relationship. It would be imperative that the counselor move very slowly during therapy to allow time for the client to feel her way through the issues which must be addressed, since a rapid pace could only heighten Joan's anxiety. Open-ended questions followed by long periods of silence and waiting were suggested as tools which might be effective during the exploratory process, particularly in helping Joan identify the causal factors of her loneliness. Early in therapy, the counselor should convey to Joan that her feelings of confusion and insecurity are not abnormal or "crazy," but that she is in a transition period, and that these feelings are a natural part of growth toward a new definition of self and a higher level of personal awareness and integration. As a Detroit clinician said, "When you go beyond old roles, it is normal for anxieties to be produced." Joan must deal with her own individuality and clarify her values and expressed feelings so that she can better focus on her present situation, her long-range goals, and the direction she wants to take in their pursuit. The directive approach of rational emotive therapy or transactional analysis may be effective in helping Joan during this process of self-exploration.

Several therapists emphasized the importance of helping Joan shift from an outer-directed to an inner-directed mode of behavior. By promoting an increased awareness and

acceptance of self, the counselor could effect Joan's discovery that she can depend on herself, rather than on others, for strength and support, and thereby use herself as a positive and powerful reinforcer. As the counselor directs attention to Joan's disassociation from former friends, she should be made to realize that movement beyond commonality with groups of people is not necessarily a negative process, but may reflect her competencies and assertiveness and indicate the value she places on her own growth. The counselor may want to share with Joan some of his/her own experiences and feelings as a professional and devote some time to talking about the process of professionalism. "You do in fact move ahead," said one therapist, "and you do leave others behind." Another stated, "I think it's an important human experience--aloneness. I know the same feeling and would share it with her." To help Joan begin to take concrete action as she resolves and redefines her future direction, short-term goal setting may be effective, although the practitioners stressed the importance of doing so within Joan's own value system.

Some clinicians felt that as therapy progresses, Joan should be made aware of the "seduction of the system." Individuals can become so influenced by societal expectations that they lose sight of their own needs and desires. As stated by one therapist, "You can become the queen bee, but may do so at the expense of personal goals and aspirations." During the self-discovery process, the counselor should also help Joan realize that the solitude she feels can be productive if she uses it as an opportunity to increase her personal

awareness and truly touch her own feelings. One therapist said, "Women who grow can find it a very lonely expe ience. It is work to find your way to a new plateau." Having Joan keep a journal could help her understanding of her inner self during the exploratory process. Relaxation training could also be useful in reducing the anxiety and tension Joan experiences because of her disrupted sense of self.

Outside Skills and Resources

Several practitioners felt that group treatment would play an important role in Joan's therapy because of its potential in offering her assurance that the confusion she feels is not unique. Suggestions for group involvement included participation in a weekend encounter group, an open-minded women's therapy group, and a male/female treatment group, although the time and choice of referral would depend on the additional information provided during counseling and the direction which the therapy takes. Putting Joan in touch with other women in the legal profession was viewed as particularly important by some therapists, for this could provide Joan with an opportunity for developing a new support group and for exposing her to the feelings and coping strategies shared by women in similar situations. Through affiliation with a women's legal organization, Joan would meet women who have also chosen non-traditional careers and who may share feelings of isolation and frustration in their struggle with a constantly changing social structure. Such organizations could, besides providing external support, also give Joan insight

and direction in how to deal with any condescension, hostility, and sexism she may encounter as a female professional.

Cautions and Negative Interventions

When asked to suggest behavior or counseling approaches which could inhibit Joan's growth, the practitioners cautioned against discounting her feelings of fear and loneliness or dismissing her struggle. Nor should the counselor question Joan's career choice. This could reinforce her anxieties and imply that her unhappiness is her fault because she chose a male-dominated profession. Because a major focus of attention in counseling Joan is to develop her inner support system, the therapist must also avoid fostering a dependency relationship with the client. Most therapists found Joan to be a stronger, more self-directed person than the women characterized in the other vignettes. They generally concurred that she would be a short-term client. However, the counselor must remain cognizant throughout therapy that Joan is in the midst of a personal identity crisis. If responsive and sensitive, the counselor can effect the positive resolution of her struggle and provide Joan with an opportunity for further growth.

* * *

Evelyn

Evelyn has just been told by her husband that he is leaving for a woman younger than she. She is completely devastated, almost in a state of shock. She had always thought that, even though there were ups and downs, they were "happily married" (for 30 years!). She had always been good to him and had supported him in every way (she quit college years ago to support them financially so he could go to business school). She feels that she gave her life to him, to their family, and that she willingly did so: "I thought it was right . . . I always tried to be a good wife and mother." If she had been a lousy wife or mother, she feels, she could understand her husband's leaving her. But even her husband agrees that she was a good wife. States Evelyn: "He says that I just don't meet his needs anymore."

The youngest of her three children has just graduated from high school and will be going to college in the fall. She has good relationships with her children, but at this point she feels basically alone and lost. She has no one to turn to. She has never worked; she has no skills. She knows nothing about financial matters. She doesn't even know what the family assets are. She is overwhelmed by the fact of her husband's leaving and says, "I'm totally devastated. Everything I've worked for has gone down the drain. I have nothing."

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Issues to Attend To

In approaching the counseling situation with Evelyn, all of the practitioners felt it imperative that the counselor remain sensitive to the shock and desolation which Evelyn is experiencing at her husband's leaving, as well as to the accompanying feelings of pain and loneliness. The counselor must allow the necessary time for Evelyn to vent her feelings and frustrations, while simultaneously helping her to understand that she is not unique or alone in her situation. By allowing Evelyn time during therapy to experience the mourning and grief process as she works through the death of the relationship, the counselor can help bring closure for her and give her the freedom to start growing. There was consensus that the counselor's primary task would be to assist Evelyn in building her self-confidence and self-esteem through such strategies as supporting her achievements, listing her strengths and abilities, exploring her options, and providing assurance of her self-worth, competency, and capabilities. The importance of this process was summarized by a mental health professional who said, "She doesn't see choices; he made the choices. She has a right to take charge of her own life." Other emotions, such as depression and anger, must be identified and investigated in the context of Evelyn's denying and repressing her anger toward herself and her husband. Several counselors also indicated the importance of addressing Evelyn's self-sacrificing behavior and helping her to realize that living her life through

another person can only be self-defeating and inhibit personal growth toward self-actualization. Focusing attention on the negative implications of this pattern of living may help her to avoid becoming involved in similar situations in the future. As one clinician emphasized, Evelyn must realize that "piggyback living is devastating."

Early in the counseling relationship, it would be necessary for Evelyn to deal with the practical aspects of her situation, in terms of her personal finances and legal position. As Evelyn has had no prior experience in these domains, appropriate referral and direction will be critical. As one therapist stated, "This is the kind of client who lends herself to partializing. Attend to her problems one by one." Many therapists felt attending to Evelyn's relationship with her children would be necessary to determine if their acceptance and understanding of the divorce is in any way affecting her.

The aging process may also warrant exploration as it relates to Evelyn at present and in the coming years. Her age should not be viewed as a limiting factor, but must be considered realistically in goal setting and career development. For example, should she consider starting college with the goal of becoming a doctor, when the training for such a career involves a considerable number of years?

Another issue which the counselor may want to explore, although mentioned by only one therapist, is whether Evelyn perceives her husband's leaving as related in any way to

sexual inadequacies on her part and if so, to what extent this influences her present affective state.

Counseling Approaches

A number of counseling approaches were recommended. Their success would depend on the counselor's ability to respond to the devastation the client is experiencing. Initially, most therapists suggested employing Rogerian techniques in which the client is allowed the necessary time to vent her feelings and release her pain, becoming more directive as counseling progresses. During the listening process, the counselor must exhibit empathy, understanding, acceptance, and support, for establishing a strong trust relationship with the client is central to Evelyn's therapy. Reassuring her that she is capable of living independently is important as the counselor helps Evelyn to acknowledge her existing life-experience skills and to build new practical and social competencies. She must also understand that the anger she may be experiencing is a normal emotion which generates energy she can use in constructive rather than destructive ways. Reality therapy and rational emotive therapy were suggested as possible approaches to the self-exploration process in identifying and resolving self-defeating behavior. Assertiveness training was suggested for building self-confidence. Goal setting could be used as a means of assisting Evelyn to complete immediate tasks, although it is important that, initially, the goals be easily manageable, with a strong like-

lihood that they will be successfully accomplished. This process should continue during therapy, and as Evelyn progresses, the counselor should assist her in setting long-range goals as well. Effective career counseling, which may be accomplished by the counselor or through referral to a more specialized practitioner, is essential for Evelyn as she explores future directions for her life. Fantasy could be a valuable technique for exploring her earlier life, happier periods, and forgotten dreams. To alleviate Evelyn's feelings that her situation is unique and that she alone must face the repercussions of her husband's leaving, several practitioners suggested that self-disclosure would be appropriate. To provide insight into Evelyn's perceptions of her marital relationship and role therein, one family therapist felt that psycho-drama, in which she reverses roles with her husband, could be effective. Another therapist suggested the technique of family mapping, involving developing a tree of female family members. The purpose would be to discover the patterns of relationships and resultant belief systems which she may have assimilated.

Outside Skills and Resources

Recommendations for referrals included suggesting a lawyer, a source of financial planning and advice and, if warranted, a career counseling service. It should be noted, however, that some therapists felt that Evelyn should be encouraged to seek out and contact a lawyer on her own. This could provide her with an opportunity to become actively

involved in completing a task and give her a sense of accomplishment. The counselor might also want to encourage Evelyn to join a support group, such as a divorce adjustment group or a women's growth group. Participating in an assertiveness training group could prove beneficial, according to some therapists, but only after Evelyn attains the confidence to feel comfortable in such a setting. All therapists suggested having available a bibliography of books and articles relating to women in similar situations of divorce, transition, and living alone.

Cautions and Negative Interventions

To insure that the counseling relationship provides the greatest opportunity for Evelyn's growth toward self-determination, independence, and positive identity redefinition, the practitioners cautioned against a number of possible inhibiting responses. In exploring Evelyn's emotional state, it is important not to discount her negative feelings or her feelings of total devastation, as this could only add to her pain and rejection. In the initial stages of therapy, the counselor must be cautious about fostering a dependency relationship, which would be self-defeating if permitted to continue longer than is necessary. Several women therapists felt it was important that she have a female counselor because of the potential danger of transferring to a male therapist her needs for a relationship with a man. Several male therapists did not concur, however, because they felt that Evelyn could benefit from a positive experience with a male counselor.

Although Evelyn's emotional state is of immediate and primary concern during the early stages of therapy, to neglect her practical problems would not provide for a comprehensive counseling relationship. Even though there are a number of issues to attend to in Evelyn's situation, moving too quickly, assigning her too many tasks to accomplish, and advising too many changes could be frightening and lend to further confusion. Placing blame on either Evelyn or her husband for the failure of the marriage should also be avoided. Blaming Evelyn would add to her feelings of guilt and hopelessness; blaming her husband would excuse Evelyn from examining her own behavior. Throughout the counseling relationship, it is imperative that the therapist avoid conveying that Evelyn is too old to grow or change. Several counselors stressed the importance of insuring that no family members move in to take care of Evelyn. Many family therapists warned of the danger that Evelyn might begin to perceive her self-worth only in terms of her children. In considering referral to various support groups during therapy, most practitioners agreed on the point that encounter or politically oriented groups should not be recommended in light of the instability of Evelyn's personal integration. The counselor must also make a point of discovering if Evelyn is taking any medication, and if so, becoming aware of its effects, particularly if the medications are tranquilizers or energy-inducing drugs. If the therapist is qualified to prescribe such medication, caution should be exercised and the effects of such drugs should be scrutinized.

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Evelyn is viewed as a long-term client, considering the extent to which her life has been disrupted by her husband's departure. Most therapists said that she should be seen frequently, particularly in the early stages of therapy. In fact, many felt it would be important for the therapist to be accessible to Evelyn at any hour because of the potential for alcoholism, suicide, and self-destructive sexual behavior.

Rita

Rita has recently gotten a divorce from a man who (she felt) took her for granted. Getting the divorce was extremely difficult for her, and without the support of some women friends she probably would not have had the courage to go through with it. Most of these friends had had similar experiences with men, in love relationships and in work relationships. There was a lot of camaraderie in their intense antagonism toward men and in their anger and outrage at this chauvinist, male-dominated society. Their attempts to get out from under domination by men was expressed in their adoption of new lifestyles and in creative/intellectual pursuits (feminist poetry, drama, etc.).

A group of these women has begun to make systematic demands on a local university for developing programs in Women's Studies. The university's response has been disappointing ("finances are limited"; "it takes time to develop a good program"; etc.). Rita has come to you very frustrated and very angry at the slowness of the university (and all society's structures) in responding to the legitimate needs and rights of women.

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Most of the practitioners agreed that because of the nature of Rita's present problem, she would be seen more often in a university counseling center or an education-related agency than at a clinic such as a community mental health center. Rita, therefore, was not found to be as typical a client as those in some of the other vignettes were, and thus did not generate the same quantity or variety of response from the therapists interviewed. One male therapist stated, "It is totally unlikely that I would have this situation. Because I am a man, Rita would never come to me."

Issues to Attend To

As the therapists indicated, the issues to be attended to in counseling Rita were primarily her feelings of anger and frustration. Anger, in particular, must be explored with any client to determine the level at which it is operating. For example, is Rita angry because, indeed, there are realities in our world which make her angry? Is she functionally paranoid? Is she dangerous to herself or others? The source of the anger also warrants considerable attention. The counselor and Rita must sort out whether the anger is in fact a result of the lack of responsiveness from the university in meeting her demands or whether she is using this situation as a vehicle for releasing emotions which may in fact stem from unresolved feelings toward her husband. One therapist stated, "You must clarify who she's angry at. I suspect that Rita probably has a lot of issues." The counselor must investigate Rita's relationship with her

friends as well, to determine how they as a support group may be influencing her life, if they are using her in any way, and whether they are in fact supportive. Exploring how she feels about them, and her reason for participating in the group, could prove valuable and help her to determine whether her active involvement in the group is encouraging her to avoid exploring herself, her personal values, and her emotional needs. Most therapists agreed that attention must be directed to what Rita wants as a person and what she wants from society. Any unrealistic expectations must be identified so that the counselor can assist Rita in realizing the limitations and realities of the present societal structure. One practitioner also suggested that the extent to which Rita has accepted her divorce should be addressed, for any unresolved emotions resulting from it could be contributing to her present state of mind.

Counseling Approaches

The practitioners stressed the importance of empathy and patience in the counseling relationship with Rita in order to build trust and allow her to express her anger. Early in therapy, the counselor must help Rita bring her problem closer to home by getting her in touch with her true feelings, but must do so without denying her right to be angry at the university. Discussion should be directed toward increasing Rita's awareness of what it means to be one's own person. She should be encouraged to listen to

herself as she explores the present situation, her role in it, and directions she wants to pursue. If the therapist hears and accepts Rita's anger in a nonjudgmental way, the client can begin to explore the ways she is dealing with that anger and what she wants to do about those feelings. One therapist commented that the positive resolution of this anger is based on a fundamental antagonism toward all men. If this is the case and Rita is in fact setting herself up so that she will not have to work with men, the counselor must assist Rita in re-evaluating these feelings and help her to understand that the bitterness she feels can only inhibit her personal growth.

Some practitioners suggested that by being confrontive and asking probing questions, the therapist may be able to determine whether Rita just wants to dwell on the issues that are feeding her anger or whether she wants to use her anger to help effect change. If Rita wants to pursue the latter direction, the therapist must help her to realize that, in the words of a family clinician, "If you are consumed by anger, you can't make change." If Rita feels powerless or helpless in her struggle to elicit positive and immediate response from the university, she must learn how to divert or redirect her anger into power and channel her energy so it can work for her in productive rather than non-productive ways. Gradually, the counselor will want to shift the focus of therapy from the problems encountered in working with the university to the exploration of Rita as an individual. Hypnosis was

recommended by one practitioner as a means of reaching Rita's true self and helping to free her up so she can begin the growth process toward mastery of herself and her environment. Reality therapy could be a useful approach as the counselor helps Rita to understand the frustrations of working with and within systems, to see that progress is being made despite the slow rate of change, and to accept that "it really does take time to develop new programs." As stated by one of the professionals interviewed, "Women are doing spadework for a harvest they will not reap."

Rita needs reassurance that she does have power, even though the situation may seem overwhelming; at the same time, she must understand that she is not a superwoman who can do anything, because there will always be obstacles which are beyond her control. "She can't tackle the world," one therapist pointed out. Using self-disclosure was suggested by some counselors as a way to facilitate the development of a strong relationship with the client and perhaps provide her with a better understanding of the tactics and process of change and the effective utilization of power.

Cautions and Negative Interventions

Of the forms of negative intervention cautioned against, discounting Rita's feelings of outrage and anger was viewed as potentially the most counterproductive. Encouraging participation in support groups playing "ain't it awful" games should also be avoided, for although her support group

can be a valuable asset, Rita must realize that such groups can inhibit as well as facilitate individual growth. Rita may be allowing others to determine what is good for her and, if this is the case, the counselor must insure that therapy focuses on Rita as a person, not on the problems of society in general.

Many therapists felt that for female counselors, it would be especially important to avoid supporting Rita's anger toward men by taking sides with her or promoting the feeling that men are chauvinistic or "no good." Statements such as "The university is run by men, so what can you expect?" can only reinforce the anger which already exists. For male counselors, it would be equally important to avoid getting into a debate about the women's movement or to condemn the efforts of Rita's group in any way. Several practitioners commented that Rita would probably not want to see a male therapist, nor should she, because her anger toward men in general could prevent any therapeutic possibilities. On the other hand, one clinician suggested that it may be of value for Rita to participate in group therapy involving both men and women, to provide her with an opportunity to experience men who would counteract her stereotypic male image. It is crucial, however, that Rita make her own choices, both in the selection of a counselor and in the direction to take in dealing with the issues which are causing her anger. Rita might continue therapy for some time as she explores these issues, or she might be satisfied to focus more clearly on what the issues are and make further decisions about them outside therapy.

Chapter Eight

COMMENTARY

The critical life events described by the women in this study reveal the complexity of factors shaping adult life today. However, not all critical events necessarily share the same emotional valence. Some are clearly crises while others are more appropriately thought of as turning points. The distinction is based upon the urgency of the situation, the degree of disturbance and disruption the event precipitates and the pervasiveness of the event in affecting one or several areas of the woman's life.

This range, from turning points to crises, is evident in the critical events themselves as well as in the vignettes. Although the degree of disruption and the accompanying level of emotion may vary, all critical events, whether turning points or crises, provide the opportunity for the budding of potentialities and the building of capacities toward more accurate self-knowledge and increased choice and conscious commitment.

The one hundred interviews described many great moments of wonder and opportunity, when it seemed that the woman could hardly run fast enough to capture the challenges of her world, like so many balloons that must be caught no matter the cost in energy. These were the exhilarating times of their lives, and were frequently followed by plateau

periods characterized by goal and value clarification and personal reintegration. Some sense of grief born of the realization that the woman had moved far from former selves, familiar persons and settings was also seen and was exemplified in the Joan vignette.

Certainly, there is no single way of viewing these critical events data. Different ways of considering them yield different insights into the identity formation process of women. For example, the cluster of events involving relationships with men outside the family of origin is the largest single theme area. While it is composed of many individual events (each one of which, when considered separately, is not greater in frequency than motherhood), nevertheless when combined, the one hundred and nineteen events pertaining to the formation, maintenance and dissolution of relationships with men reaffirm the continuing influence of men upon the identity formation process of women. A similar study of critical events with men would probably likewise reveal a large cluster of events involving relationships with women. Expanding options for lifestyle and marital status, together with women's increasing willingness to express their achievement-related needs, do not mean that relationships with men will become less important. In fact, just the reverse may be the case, precisely because of increased variation in the process by which men and women define their sexual identities.

The establishment of sexual identity has long been considered central and crucial to the identity formation

process of healthy, mature adults. In most cultures, the important adult roles have been sex-associated. But in America today, the individual's sexual identity and accompanying roles are increasingly determined by personal needs, values, and abilities, and are therefore more likely to be the subject of conscious deliberation. The parameters of sexual identity are no longer fixed, nor are sex-roles as likely to be polarized. These changes have made relationships between men and women often difficult, certainly unpredictable, and for some persons, even dangerous. Relationships with men will probably continue to be a key important factor in the identity formation process of women precisely because the dynamics of such relationships are increasingly subject to individual choice.

Another issue raised by the data from this study is the function of early life experience as preparation for adult life. The relatively few reported critical events occurring in childhood and adolescence (when viewed together with the reported differences in self's versus mother's role perception) point up how distant many women feel themselves to be from their pasts. That the women in this study did not see their early life experiences as being critical to their present self-definitions may suggest conscious rejection of early sex-role socialization, resistance to acknowledging the importance of early learnings, and the effects of rapid social change. As the pace of change accelerates, past experiences have less value as directives for present behavior.

Consider motherhood, the dynamics of which are drastically different today from those a generation ago. Instead of fighting to survive delivery, disease and death, women now fight to achieve identity, independence and integration in their discontinuous lives. Role behaviors that were taken for granted must now to some degree be consciously learned. The breakdown of the extended family and traditional community support networks leaves young mothers isolated and frequently without psychological support. While it is not necessarily the responsibility of the helping professions to organize support groups and networks, part of the future role of practitioners may involve the development of sustaining and healing community structures which enhance the quality of adult life and which provide support and the opportunity for new learnings at critical times in those lives.

The responses of the thirty-five helping professionals to the five vignettes encompassed a range of counseling and therapeutic approaches growing out of the variety of theoretical orientations which inform today's practitioner. However, there were four common patterns evident in the responses. These patterns may point to characteristics of counselors and therapists who are particularly effective with women clients.

First, as practitioners, their posture is an active one. While they value the necessary role of empathy and insight in treatment, these are not considered sufficient for change. Many, however, did emphasize encouraging the woman client "to use her mind to figure out what has happened and why." In their responses to the vignettes, this

group of practitioners saw the emergence of insight accompanied by the ongoing development of a practical, well-planned, logical strategy for progress toward goals. In many instances, they appeared to be teaching decision-making skills.

The second common pattern observed in the responses of this group of practitioners was their tendency to want to treat the whole person. Regardless of the nature of the presenting problem, they explored many dimensions of personality and many areas of the client's life and functioning.

Third, the extent of consensus among the helping professionals interviewed must be noted. Despite variance in professional affiliation, in the nature and extent of training, in agency settings and in theoretical orientations, there was a high level of consensus particularly in the responses to Pat and Evelyn, suggesting the existence in practice of models for the treatment of some types of women clients.

The final pattern which stood out in the pool of responses involved the practitioner's attention to the social and historical context of the client's life. Recognition of the effects of sex-role socialization and appreciation of the implications of rapid social changes were evident both in their conceptualizations of the client's problems and in their recommendations for indicated and contraindicated counseling/therapeutic approaches. While these practitioners refused to explain the problem exclusively on the basis of sex-role socialization, sex bias, or other social factors, nevertheless they did not view the client as having been solely responsible for her problem. For many women, critical

events call previously held sex-role attitudes, values, and behaviors into question.

This raises the issue of the degree to which critical events for women are accompanied by increased awareness of their second-class social status. To what degree is the awareness of sexism as a personal and social phenomenon a factor in the critical event? The critical events interviews revealed differences in the level of intensity of awareness of sexism. For some women, the encounter with the reality, scope, and meaning of sexism was gradual. It evolved through a series of events, thus providing time for the woman to work through the anger and subsequently to establish a flexible truce with her world so as to allow for the productive expression of her energies. In the Carol vignette, we see an example of a young woman whose awareness of sexism is gradually coming into focus.

For still other women, a critical event will be an epiphany through which she comes to realize the impact of sex-role ascriptions as she becomes aware that her very value as a human being is, if not in question, indeed subject to discussion and negotiation. For women such as Evelyn, the critical event is accompanied by this kind of revelation of her status, devastating her sense of self-worth, destroying her basis for action, and rendering her at least temporarily immobile.

At this time in history it is appropriate to view the resolution of issues related to sexism as a developmental task for adult women. In some way, the healthy, mature adult

woman today must come to grips with the fact of sharing membership in a group with derived status, a group whom it has been socially permissible to demean, to exploit, and to manipulate. The psychological processes associated with the resolution of sexist issues are akin to those of racist issues for blacks.

There is a tragic irony in the fact that now, when women are beginning to assume roles and to share responsibilities with men, at a time when our society cries out for application of all available talent and energy to the solution of our collective problems, this is also the era of rising consciousness of sexism.

The data from this study of critical events shaping women's identity and of effective counseling responses to those critical events have been richer than anticipated. Information on coping strategies, emotional states, and sources of support associated with the critical events await analysis for presentation to the helping professions.

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Appendix A

CODING SCHEMA

Relational

Getting married

Marital difficulities

Divorce

Support of husband

Intimate relationship with man (not husband)

Difficulties with man (not husband)

Having children

Rewarding relations with children

Specific difficulties with children

General child-rearing blues

Good relations with women

Difficulties with women

Special effort to establish friends

Good relations with parents

Difficulties with parents

Extra-marital sexual experience

Sex discrimination in family of origin

Other experience in family of origin

Work Related

Volunteer work

First job

Changing jobs

Quitting work because of others' needs, to have children, to support husband

Quitting work for own reasons

Going back to work

Tension between work and family

Educational

Experience in elementary or high school

College

Returning to school after being away, as a source of stimulation

Returning to school after being away, as preparation for work

Quitting school to get married, have children

Quitting school to work because of financial need

Women's Studies

Personal

Need for independence, freedom

General lack of fulfillment, boredom, in married life

Fear of incompetence, feelings of insecurity

Nervous breakdown

Suicide attempt

Therapy

Religious crisis

Support group

Women's rap group

Body image

Insight through books, media

Re-evaluation of self, clarification of priorities and values

Decision to assert self, make own decisions

Health Related

Illness of self

Illness/death of significant other

Abortion

Other

Moving

Traveling, vacationing

Sexism

Racism

Appendix B

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL (N=100)	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Did not complete high school	0	0	0	0	0	0
Completed high school or GED	1	1	1	2	0	0
Some education after high school	14	14	10	16	4	11
College degree	21	21	13	20	8	22
Graduate study	64	64	40	63	24	67
	100	100	64	101	36	100

MARITAL STATUS (N=99)						
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Single	6	6	0	0	6	17
Married	72	73	53	84	19	54
Separated	3	3	2	3	1	3
Divorced	13	13	6	10	7	20
Widowed	4	4	2	3	2	6
	98	99	63	100	35	100

TOTAL FAMILY INCOME (N=94)	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Under $5,000	1	1	0	0	1	3
$5,001 to $12,000	6	6	2	3	4	11
$12,001 to $20,000	19	20	9	16	10	28
$20,001 to $30,000	29	31	23	40	6	17
$30,001 to $40,000	15	16	8	14	7	19
Over $40,000	24	26	16	28	8	22
	94	100	58	101	36	100
AGE (N=98)						
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Under 30	12	12	3	5	9	26
30 to 39	43	44	28	44	15	43
40 to 49	25	26	19	30	6	17
50 to 59	15	15	10	16	5	14
60+	3	3	3	5	0	0
	98	100	63	100	35	100
RELIGION (N=96)						
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Catholic	18	19	9	15	9	26
Protestant	51	53	30	48	21	62
Jewish	14	15	14	23	0	0
Other	13	14	9	15	4	12
	96	101	62	101	34	100

NUMBER OF CHILDREN (N=91)	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
None	5	5	3	5	2	7
1	7	8	2	3	5	19
2	40	44	29	45	11	41
3	23	25	19	30	4	15
4	11	12	8	13	3	11
5	3	3	2	3	1	4
6	1	1	0	0	1	4
7	0	0	0	0	0	0
8+	1	1	1	2	0	0
	91	99	64	101	27	101

HOW IMPORTANT IS RELIGION? (N=97)	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Very important	34	35	17	27	17	50
Fairly important	45	46	31	49	14	41
Unimportant	18	19	15	24	3	9
	97	100	63	100	34	100

WORK HISTORY (N=100)	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Currently working outside the home	70	70	35	55	35	97
Have worked, but not working now outside the home	29	29	28	44	1	3
Never worked outside the home	1	1	1	2	0	0
	100	100	64	101	36	100

COMPARE MOTHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF ROLES, RIGHTS OF WOMEN (N=99)	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Very different	23	23	15	24	8	22
Different	29	29	27	43	2	6
Not sure	7	7	2	3	5	14
Similar	19	19	11	17	8	22
Very similar	21	21	8	13	13	36
	99	99	63	100	36	100

OCCUPATION OF FATHER (N=93)	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Professional	19	20	16	25	3	10
Managerial, proprietary (including farmers)	35	38	22	34	13	45
Clerical	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skilled	16	17	13	20	3	10
Semi-skilled	20	22	12	19	8	28
Unskilled	3	3	1	2	2	7
	93	100	64	100	29	100

Appendix C

CRITICAL EVENTS DATA

CATEGORIES OF CRITICAL EVENTS	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Relational	250	40	161	38	89	44
Work Related	101	16	70	17	31	15
Educational	98	16	68	16	30	15
Personal	72	12	54	13	18	9
Health Related	42	7	30	7	12	6
Other	61	10	37	9	24	12
Total	624	101	420	100	204	101

RELATIONAL EVENTS	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Marriage	38	15	34	21	4	4
Marital difficulties	33	13	21	13	12	13
End of relationship	11	4	8	5	3	3
Intimate relationship with man other than husband	11	4	8	5	3	3
Difficulties with man	7	3	3	2	4	5
Event in husband's life	13	5	11	7	2	2
Extramarital sexual experience	6	2	4	2	2	2
Motherhood	41	16	30	18	11	12
Rewarding experiences w/children	2	1	1	1	1	1
Difficulties w/children	19	8	19	12	0	0
Good relations w/parents	3	1	1	1	2	2
Difficulties w/parents	12	5	3	2	9	10
Sex bias in family	7	3	4	2	3	3
Experience in family	16	6	5	3	11	12
Role model	17	7	5	3	12	13
Friendships with women	5	2	1	1	4	4
Difficulties with women	2	1	2	1	0	0
Difficulties with co-workers	7	3	1	1	6	7
Total	250	99	161	100	89	95

WORK RELATED EVENTS	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Volunteer	9	9	7	10	2	6
First job	37	37	25	36	12	39
Changing jobs	9	9	4	6	5	16
Quitting work	8	8	8	11	0	0
Returning to work	7	7	6	9	1	3
Tension - work/family	18	18	13	19	5	16
Difficulties in work environment	7	7	2	3	5	16
Unemployment	3	3	2	3	1	3
Retirement	3	3	3	4	0	0
Total	101	101	70	99	31	99
EDUCATIONAL EVENTS	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Elementary-secondary	10	10	6	9	4	13
College	34	35	23	34	11	37
Returning to school	39	40	24	35	15	50
Quitting school	4	4	4	6	0	0
Women's Studies	11	11	11	16	0	0
Total	98	100	68	100	30	100

PERSONAL EVENTS	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Need for independence freedom, career	13	18	10	19	3	17
Lack of fulfillment in married life	25	35	22	41	3	17
Fear of incompetence, insecurity	4	6	2	4	2	11
Awareness through support groups	12	17	10	19	2	11
Body image	4		2	4	2	11
Re-evaluation of self, decision to assert self	14	19	8	15	6	33
Total	72	101	54	102	18	100
HEALTH-RELATED EVENTS	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Illness of self	22	52	19	63	3	25
Illness/death of significant other	19	45	10	33	9	75
Abortion	1	2	1	3	0	0
Total	42	99	30	99	12	100

OTHER CRITICAL EVENTS	COMBINED		WHITE		BLACK	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Moving, traveling	27	44	25	68	2	8
Sexism	21	34	12	32	9	38
Racism	13	21	0	0	13	54